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New Statesman

Focus on Fulham

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Loonytune time

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New Statesman

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YOU'VE READ THE BOOK . . .
JOHN COLEMAN views Merchant-Ivory's translation of Forster's *A Room With A View*

EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN
James Baldwin reflects on the Atlanta child murders of 1979-81 and what they signify; his thoughts are reviewed by CLIVE DAVIS

WATCH OUT — POLICE ABOUT
With public confidence in the police at an all-time low, MARTIN WALKER examines the case of the Manchester students who were systematically harassed and beaten by local police officers

New Statesman
Vol 111 No 2871 4 April 1986

What America wants, America will have

VICE PRESIDENT Bush, setting out this week for a tour of the Middle East, said that stable world oil prices were 'essential to US national security'. Those words must be noted carefully, for they have a coded operational meaning.

The meaning is that Washington has decided to put getting a stable oil price in the very highest category of policy goal. In common sense, the concept 'essential to national security' is fairly clear, though much abused by governments. In the case of the Reagan Administration, it has come to mean one simple and clear thing: a policy that the United States is prepared to use any means, including especially the use of armed force, to achieve.

As Professor Noam Chomsky argues on page 17, American foreign policy is now being conducted on the basis that whatever Washington declares it wants or needs, Washington is entitled to use force to get. That was the logic and morality of European imperialism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its crude re-assertion by the United States in the 1980s is creating a moral and political crisis for Western Europe that goes far beyond the objections of the peace movement to NATO and the bomb.

The American ideological position contains absurd contradictions. For the implication of the Administration's message is that major suppliers of crude oil, particularly Saudi Arabia, should cut back output so as to reduce the glut on the international market and steady the oil price. But as a 'free enterprise' government, at the same time it has to insist that it does not wish in any way to interfere in the international free market in oil.

An argument could be constructed (and was in the early 1970s when the American oil worry was not uncertainty about price but about supply) that keeping the oil flowing *was* an 'essential' American national interest. Even then, the assertion of the right to use force to protect that national interest if, say, the Arabs wanted to cut off oil as a political weapon, would certainly be a breach of all the norms of international law.

But no such argument can even be constructed in relation to the *price* of oil, let alone to the *lowering* of the price of oil. It is a salutory lesson of this 'crisis' to those on the political and economic Right to discover hard evidence that markets left to their own devices produce violent price and supply swings whose consequences are extremely painful. The United States did nothing ten years ago when the oil price explosions forced dozens of the least developed countries of the world into perpetual bankruptcy and starvation. Instead, with American banks in the lead, it actively encouraged an explosion of international lending as Arab petro-dollars were recycled by bankers taking their 'turn' to finance countries that could no longer afford the price of imported oil. And it starved international lending institutions like the World Bank of finance or support, leaning instead on moral strictures about the need for developing countries to 'set their houses in order'.

Today the story is different. The United States-based international oil industry is invested to its neck on the assumption that the oil price would stay at $35 a barrel and above, ignoring the risk that if it went below $17 there would be chaos. Today, as well, American banks are up to their necks in lending to oil-producing countries on the basis that the loans could be serviced by revenues from oil at $35 a barrel.

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There will certainly be widespread bankruptcies as a result of adjusting to the new price level. These adjustments will be nothing like as painful as those that had to be made by poor countries when the price was going the other way. But this is *not* a question of US national security and Europe must not once again get dragged into international illegality and immorality on Washington's coat-tails.

There's a hole in your Budget, dear Nigel

Two weeks is a long time in politics. So Chancellor Lawson is probably hoping that, provided he keeps his head down and says nothing, people will not notice that the collapse in the world oil price over the last few days has made a complete monkey of the Budget speech and the Budget strategy that he delivered on 18 March.

Lawson then spoke as if the collapse in the price (at that point to some $16 per barrel) was an event of the past. Now it has passed $10 and is still going down. He estimated then that the revenue from North Sea oil for this financial year would be halved to £6 billion. On any projection of what has happened in the last ten days, that estimate ought already to be reduced by £2 billion. Some serious analysts in the City are saying that the North Sea oil yield will be much lower still, perhaps not much more than £2 billion this year and less still next.

In short, a socking great hole has been blown in the middle of the Lawson budget arithmetic. If he actually believed what he then said about not having the money prudently to finance any more expenditure, or to make any more tax concessions, he ought now to tell us what emergency steps he proposes to take to get back to where he was two weeks ago.

It can with complete confidence he predicted that he will do nothing of the kind. It is the *politics* of the Treasury, not the *economics* of the Treasury, that preoccupy the Chancellor and he knows full well that an emergency package of spending cuts or tax increases now would be political suicide for his party in general and for himself in particular.

Requiem for a North Sea oil bonanza

On 18 March, Lawson had the gall to talk of the 'outstanding success of the North Sea' and to claim that it was based on 'the fact that it is the freest oil province in the world' in which the decisions about output and price have been a matter for private companies and not for the government. The fall in the world oil price in real terms back to where it was in 1972 marks well and truly the end of the decade and a half when this country might have gathered in the fruits of a North Sea oil bonanza.

Foreigners are simply unable to understand how this country has failed to make any collective or national advantage for the future out of such a huge windfall capital gain. The strands of the tragic waste are in fact distressingly clear. In the middle 1970s Labour governments spoke of industrial planning, to ensure that the benefits of North Sea oil went into long-term investment and the regeneration of British industry; and of a national energy policy, to decide on a sensible long-term balance between oil, gas, coal and nuclear energy and on a sensible rate at which to deplete our finite North Sea reserves. In the event, such planning and policy as was achieved was very feeble.

Since 1979 a Tory government's policy over the North Sea has consisted solely of a messianic faith in private sector capitalism and the farsightedness of market forces, while itself shortsightedly using £10 billion and more of North Sea oil revenue to finance the Falklands War, the miners' strike and unprecedented tax concessions to the rich.

That party is now over. Only, instead of it having been a party to remember with pleasure as a celebration of the rebirth of the British economy, we are just left with the usual national hangover. ☐

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MILITANT PUTSCH IN LIVERPOOL COULD BACKFIRE

Problem page

Big changes have taken place at the *Morning Star* since its writers and supporters set up the Communist Campaign Group to fight the Communist Party leadership. They even thought of starting an agony column, we can exclusively reveal, but decided against it.

Dear Morning Star,
Can you help? Some 15 years ago I fell in love with the idea of communist revolution. For the first few years, all went well. When you told me that the working class was going from strength to strength, like in the miners' strike of 1974, I believed you. But since then I've got more and more confused and depressed. We've had a right-wing Tory government for the last seven years, racism and sexual violence seem to be getting worse, nationalised industries are getting sold off, the last miners' strike was defeated. Half the working class seems to be unemployed or drifting aimlessly, though I have to say I don't really know what the working class is any more, especially as Labour's vote in 1983 was the lowest it's even been, and there are fewer members in socialist groups than ever. What should I do?

Dear Confused,
You've been reading *Marxism Today* haven't you? My advice is to chuck all those pernicious magazines out of the house and stop worrying about irrelevant problems like so-called Thatcherism or race or sex. There *isn't* a crisis for the Left. The working class is what it has always been — for all practical purposes that means those trade union members who support the Alternative Economic Strategy. My advice to you is to ignore all this new-fangled nonsense about 'renewal of the Left', and come to our Communist Campaign Group meetings. I can't tell you how many of us there are, but I can assure you that we are carrying on the *true* tradition of the Communist Party (viz trade union work) before it was hijacked by *Marxism Today*. One day soon we will be victorious in getting back Party leadership. If you want to know how, I can't tell you, but you will find our new pamphlet, 'Which Way for Labour' immensely comforting. Send £1 and I'll send you a copy in a plain brown wrapper.

Yours,
Communist Campaign Group

As the Militant Hydra rose again over Easter, IAN WILLIAMS predicts a backlash against its procedural and legal devices

AFTER THE walkout of what transport workers' leader Ron Todd called the 'Stupid Seven' from Labour's National Executive, it's obvious that Militant can add — and subtract — better than Labour. It wasn't too surprising that the Temporary Co-ordinating Committee established to take over the Liverpool District Labour Party should have fallen quickly back into the practised hands of those who avoided the chop earlier in the week.

At its first meeting the day before Good Friday, even though national organiser Joyce Gould ruled against holding elections without written nominations, they went ahead and all positions went to Militants or to those they trusted.

Tony Mulhearn, District Party President, rolled the rock from his intended political tomb and was resurrected as Chair of the Temporary Co-ordinating Committee (TCC). The tendency has scores of full-timers and the full power of council patronage, while Walworth Road has yet to appoint the one Liverpool officer's position advertised in January, let alone the second called for by the enquiry team.

While the TCC elections were certain to be overturned from the beginning, it's doubtful that people like Ron Todd of the transport workers, John Golding of the National Communications Union and Ken Cure of the engineers approve of the way their local representatives voted. Council leader John Hamilton, representing the Labour councillors, didn't even know about the meeting, although unsurprisingly his deputy Derek Hatton did, and came.

Disbanding of the District Labour Party has left Militant's organisation intact and able to profit from the chaos and confusion caused to the official organisation in Liverpool. When Peter Taaffe, *Militant*'s editor, pulls strings in London, thousands respond. By comparison if Larry Whitty or Joyce Gould is allowed to pull a string the other end gets lost in union structures and the labyrinthine complexities of Labour's federal structure.

Militant-bashing *does* produce poll bonuses for Neil Kinnock — if it's seen as effective. On the other hand Militant feels that it gained from a reaction against past 'witch hunts'.

This time its more overtly sectarian approach shows signs of causing a backlash from the left. The murkiness of Liverpool events followed by the recourse to the 'capitalist courts' and the procedural putsch of the walk-out have reflected no credit on the party. It reinforces determination to deal with Militant and will further isolate the so-called 'hard left' on the National Executive. Among the walkers out Joan Maynard, and Eric Clark, for example, were elected by very narrow majorities on union block votes at last year's Labour Party Conference. Eric Heffer dropped 100,000 votes last year in the constituency section while Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise face immediate danger if there is a backlash from constituencies.

The only thing Militant has gained is time, since there is no doubt that the National Executive will approve the quorum changes necessary to carry through disciplinary action. The resounding anti-Militant majorities at the various regional Labour Party conferences (10 to 1 in their home patch in the North West), even before the latest events, also indicate that annual conference will not only approve any expulsions but also pass any rule changes necessary to avert future procedural and litigious impediments. Indeed the difficulty would be restraining the wholesale purge which many exasperated union and party members may want. ●

Joyce Gould, soon-to-be Labour's National Agent, who got handed the poisoned chalice this time

Wapping boosts Left in engineers' poll

THE LEFT-WING candidate for the presidency of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, John Tocher, could win a narrow victory because of a backlash against the Right after Wapping. Bill Jordan, the Right's candidate, is in favour of a merger with the electricians (EETPU), accused of helping Rupert Murdoch set up his Wapping plant without the print unions.

Tocher made labour history with the breadth of the rainbow coalition behind him in the election, which closed last Saturday. Euro-communists, Tankies, Militants, Tribunites and even many who would once have been regarded as right-wingers rallied to him — but to what extent won't be known until the result's announced on 28 April.

The issue of a merger with the electricians is the key to this realignment. To many AUEW members it implies a break with the rest of the TUC, and a move towards a Japanese company union style. To them it was entirely appropriate that the EETPU tried to affiliate to the CBI two years ago.

The AUEW's state of perpetual election with balloting for every officer and a high level of shop-floor involvement would be difficult to reconcile with the electricians' rigidly centralised appointment of officers and 'consumer' unionism. The AUEW's democracy would probably be an early casualty of a merger.

The election's importance was clearly recognised by the tabloids, which united in vilification of Tocher, who is, for example, a 'Communist' according to the Mirror, *despite leaving the Communist Party a decade ago.*

The AUEW's electoral politics has bred a host of electioneering groups allied to the right-wing 'Mainstream' movement, in which Jordan himself and David Prendergast of the breakaway Union of 'Democratic' Mineworkers are prime movers. But at least in the AUEW they fight elections. In the EETPU one of the solutions to ballot-rigging in the 1950s was to abolish most ballots.

Ian Williams

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A PUZZLE FOR FULHAM'S YUPPIES

Much more interesting than the Official Monster Raving Loony candidate, Boyd Black is a communist standing on a Northern Ireland Unionist ticket in next Thursday's Fulham by-election.
FIONNUALA O CONNOR reports on a very strange political alliance

Boyd Black, one of Enoch Powell's 'nice young Unionist Marxists'

THIRTY-NINE year old Queen's University Belfast economics lecturer Boyd Black is a self-professed Communist, has been for years, but he is sponsored and supported in Fulham by Northern Ireland Unionist politicians of a stripe for decades convinced that communism is at best the work of the devil and at worst a manifestation of Irish Republicanism.

But Black's politics are well known to the prominent Unionists who have 'endorsed' him — the right-wing MP and Euro-MP John Taylor foremost among them — and they know that his Unionism has been at least as constant as his avowed Marxism.

The 'Campaign for Equal Citizenship' supporting Black in Northern Ireland is just the latest in a string of fronts for Black and colleagues, and 'Democratic Rights for Northern Ireland', the platform on which he's standing in Fulham, is the latest London alias of their members there.

As members of the small but tireless British and Irish Communist Organisation (BICO) they have launched campaign after campaign on the theme of full integration, demanding first that the Labour Party and then the other major British parties should organise in Northern Ireland, and absorbing the small Northern Ireland Labour Party in the process. Their catch cry of 'equal British citizenship denied' has kept them always at least within hailing distance of the Integrationist brand of Unionism. 'Those nice young Unionist Marxists', Enoch Powell is reported to have called them, and the affection is returned.

BICO? you say, never heard of them. But annually they have surfaced at Labour Party conferences urging organisation in Northern Ireland, rarely sponsored by the same MP twice and regularly shut down by the party leadership on advice from the Northern Ireland trade unions. They reckon Roy Mason harbours a secret admiration for them and survive on winks and nods from others.

From wildly mixed origins — some early members were Maoists, some veterans of the IRA campaigns of the 1950s — BICO developed their guiding Two-Nation theory, deciding that the problem with Republicanism wasn't so much bad leadership as Republicanism itself. The theme has become clearer over the past decade: no ducking the irreconcilable identity of British-Protestant and Irish-Catholic, salvation only through integration and a 'normal class-based politics' in Northern Ireland. And since the Anglo-Irish agreement was signed last November, they've come smack alongside mainstream Unionism. Such a betrayal into the hands of the Irish government was only possible because Northern Ireland is deprived of representative government 'excluded from the normal politics of the State'.

Black first read BICO literature while a graduate student in the US and came home a convert in the early 1970s. In 1974 BICO printed a daily Workers' Bulletin to support the Loyalist strike that brought down Northern Ireland's attempt at devolution, the power-sharing experiment. It jeered at the power-sharers and lauded the 'disciplined' strikers, co-ordinated by an Ulster Workers Council representing politicians and all the main Loyalist para-military groups. The suggestion, clearly deliberate but untrue, was that the bulletin was an official strike paper. Black wrote most of it. More recently he has edited the BICO magazine distributed in Britain *The Communist*, notable for the virulence of its anti-Scargill stand.

The Anglo-Irish agreement, in Loyalist eyes an occasion for a re-run of their 1974 victory, has brought the widest-yet BICO front into its first ever public and mutually declared alliance with Unionism. No one supposes the Unionist politicians are in the throes of ideological upheaval. But BICO is said to be considering abandoning the 'Communist' tag, and is becoming indistinguishable from the Loyalism of, say, *Ulster Defiant*, which has carried articles attacking the trade union movement and calling on Protestants to join the British Labour Party. ●

The law of hypocrisy

The British press automatically assumed last week that President Reagan had a right to assert 'the freedom of the seas' in the Gulf of Sirte. But Colonel Gadafy's 'line of death' claim to territorial waters can be argued in international law.

The United States cited a treaty — the 1982 Law of the Sea — which it hadn't signed, against Libya, which had, and another treaty — the 1958 Geneva Convention on territorial waters — which it had signed but Libya hadn't. The US has an excellent case against Gadafy as a sponsor of terrorism, for which international law, usually an imprecise science, strongly supports economic sanctions; but even trigger-happy dictators have territorial rights.

Libya's claim to the Gulf of Sirte is based on its being a 'historic bay', a standard exception to international 12-mile limits on coastal waters. In the 19th century British courts held that the Bristol Channel was British territory under this heading. The US traditionally says that Chesapeake Bay falls in this category.

Unfortunately for him, Gadafy only set out the claim to the Gulf for the first time in 1973. He's handicapped by the failures of his predecessors — King Idris, Mussolini and the Ottomans — to take the claim seriously. Gadafy's legal problem is the classic weakness of new post-colonial Afro-Asian states, which can't rely on a heritage of claims by earlier regimes.

On the other hand, the International Court at the Hague concluded, in the 1951 Ango-Norwegian fisheries case, that economic factors or close physical links between a bay and the coastline can back up a claim to territory.

See Noam Chomsky, p17

Robert Silver

From nanny to bookie state

Anyone who's ever wanted to leave their job, but stopped to think about their pension, could be forgiven for thinking that portable personal pensions might be one of the few sensible ideas this government has produced. But careful analysis shows that the *pièce de resistance* of the deservedly unpopular Social Security Bill is not going to live up to the prospectus.

In the avidly-read Technical Annex to his White Paper, Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler showed that private schemes would be better than SERPS, the state pension scheme. But this was achieved by the simple device of comparing private pensions with SERPS *after* it's been 'modified' — and not with the SERPS you were once promised.

If you compare personal pensions with SERPS as it now is — and *without* adding the 2 or 4 per cent extra contributions from earnings that the government assumes — almost everyone stands to be worse off with personal pensions, most of all women, and particularly widows.

What's more, if you don't fancy the idea of your contributions providing fuel for the gravy train of high City salaries (as officially disapproved of by Mrs Thatcher), then a personal pension is not for you. The evidence to Fowler's own pensions inquiry revealed that administrative charges amounted to as little as 1.5 per cent of contributions for SERPS, 5 per cent for occupational pension schemes (those provided by an employer) and as much as 18.4 per cent for personal pension schemes.

Lastly, personal pensions are a gamble, and with more serious consequences than a flutter on the Grand National. Most of the new policies will be 'unit-linked', so there can be no guarantee of the amount of the pension. A stock market crash could wipe out the value of many such policies, and anyone retiring at the trough of the market would suffer for it throughout retirement. Goodbye nanny state, and welcome to the bookie state.

Which is not to say, of course, that the present system is perfect. People who change jobs a lot, or even once, lose out. Those who do well at present are mostly men with long periods of unbroken service with an employer with a good scheme. And the earnings-related element of SERPS preserves the inequality of incomes of those not in employers' schemes. But SERPS as set up by the Labour government in 1975 — with the agreement of the Conservative opposition — is very much better than anything that went before.

Having your own portable pension has been compared by Fowler to owning your own house. But people don't specially want their *own* pension. They want the best value for money they can get. By that criterion personal pensions are a distinctly poor buy.

Michael Meacher MP

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Civil action threatens future protest

SEVENTEEN people with white scarves gagging their mouths led a 4,000-strong protest march at a nuclear bunker site at Carmarthen, Wales, on Saturday.

They were symbolically gagged because Carmarthen District Council has brought an injunction against them to stop them entering the area round the bunker or inciting unlawful acts of protest. But the complaints, being brought in a civil action, also include claims of conspiracy to cause damage.

The council is trying to recoup from the protestors £¼ million in time lost on work building the bunker and in fees for security guards. (The first security guards employed, from a local firm, were dismissed because they became too sympathetic to the protestors. They have been replaced by Pritchards, a firm famous also for its contract cleaning services, used by local councils keen on privatisation.)

Geoffrey Bindman, solicitor for several of the defendants, says that claims for security bills seemed unprecedented. 'It could affect all forms of protest if this is successful and put a severe restraint on the freedom to disagree.' The cost of private policing or even extra wages for local forces could be foisted on trade unions and others.

The defendants feel they've already scored one small victory, though. During the injunction hearing the council's barrister John Venmore admitted that the underground building that had been under construction for the past year was indeed a nuclear bunker — a fact previously denied by the council.

During the informed council debate last autumn, Councillor S. S. Bowen asserted: 'This is not a nuclear bunker because we don't keep anything nuclear in it.' A reference was made to how few people were killed when the Bomb was dropped 'on Nicaragua' and Councillor W. D. Thomas assured his constituents they'd be safe in nuclear war because of the 'two foot thick walls' of Welsh houses.

It seems that the council has responded to prompting from the Home Office in bringing the civil action; Eric Alley, Home Office adviser on civil defence, has admitted that it is deeply worried over the popularity of the nuclear-free zone initiative in Wales. Five out of eight Welsh county councils refuse to fall in line with civil defence regulations.

The original idea to build a bunker, though, may have been to pull a fast one on the Home Office. The council wanted a new Chair's parlour but couldn't afford it because of the cost of foundations in wet ground. They hit on the brilliant idea of a bunker under the parlour — thus getting the Home Office to pick up 75 per cent of the tab. However, now that the cost of the building has risen from an estimated £60,000 to £298,394 (as yet unfinished) visions of a nice parlour for the Chair of the council to entertain in are fading fast.

Jane Dibblin

Asians lose self-defence appeal

THREE of the Newham Seven, who claimed they were defending themselves against white racists in a fight two years ago, lost their appeal to the High Court last week.

Parvaiz Khan, Zafer Khan and Habib Mohamed were convicted of affray and sentenced to 100 hours' community service at the Old Bailey last August. The affray outside the Duke of Edinburgh pub in Newham, east London, was the climax of a series of inter-racial confrontations on 7 April 1984. In the Old Bailey trial last year three white youths were found guilty of common assault and fined £100, three Asians were acquitted on all charges, and four other Asians — including the three who appealed — were acquitted of various charges but convicted of affray.

At the High Court, defence counsel Ian MacDonald argued that the trial judge, Neil Denison QC, in his summing up failed to direct the jury adequately on the central issue of self-defence. He claimed that where the jury had been directed adequately on other charges of damaging a public house and carrying offensive weapons, the defendants were acquitted. It was also argued that there was a serious conflict of evidence between police officers' account of the affray and that of independent lay witnesses.

The three appeal judges conceded that Denison had misdirected the jury, but concluded that had the jury been directed properly the result would have been the same. 'One had only to look at the photographs. Self-defence was unrealistic in the circumstances . . . who started the fight earlier in the day is another matter.'

Last month Newham Monitoring Project published its annual report for 1985. As compared to 1984 there had been a 67 per cent increase in the number of cases brought to its attention. It recorded 166 cases of racial attacks and harassment and continued incidents of verbal and physical abuse, but the most distressing feature was the increasing number of violent attacks with weapons and arson attacks on homes.

Zubaida Motala

MISCELLANY

We all chipped in

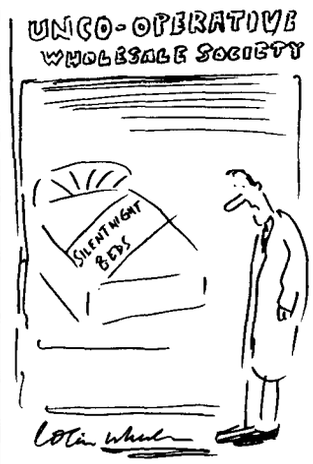
When the 12 Militants took the Labour Party to the capitalist courts six of them did so with taxpayers' money. Even Derek Hatton avoided pawning his suits to pay lawyers' bills. Heartened by this rare example of state munificence, Liverpool councillors hope to get legal aid for their appeal against surcharge. If She gets to hear of this, legal aid will be abolished too.

Yuppie boom?

Labour's secret weapon in the Fulham by-election is the 2,000 extra electors that the Tories and Social Democrats thought were the new gentry moving in. For many years the number of electors in Fulham has been declining gracefully. Last year it was down 600 on the 1983 figure at 51,265. This year, though, it's gone up to 53,255. What the Tories and SDP don't know is that last year the Labour Party carried out a registration drive — and calculate that 1,800 of the new names are on our side.

Out of bed

You can't buy South African goods at your local Co-op but you *can* buy a bed made by non-union labour in the Silentnight factory in Barnoldswick, where the workforce has been out on strike for many months. Over 200 delegates at the Co-operative Party



conference in Nottingham this Easter unanimously agreed that solidarity begins at home, and refused to take this lying down. They called upon retail co-ops like the giant CRS and CWS to break with their strange bedfellows and stop their purchases, which account for 30 per cent of Silentnight production. You see, the Co-op party *does* do something other than send delegates to local Labour Party committees.

Unsettled

The inquiry started last week into the closure of the Carlisle-Settle rail line even though it now has the best growth rate in the provincial sector. Railworkers aren't too surprised. The manager given the job of closing the line, Ron Cotton, pioneered cheap 'Saver' tickets on the Liverpool-London line in the face of top management opposition. Guilty of filling seats on trains, his punishment was to be given his present job in 1983. In view of the work needed on the crumbling masonry of the famous Ribblehead viaduct it's ironic that rumour claims that one reason for his transfer was that he wasn't *a freemason. The message from sympathisers is: keep your trouser-legs unfurled and the trains full.*

Business news

Sheer delight at the headline 'Exposed: Maggie's Share Dealing' in the *capitalist* press (*Mail on Sunday*, 23 March) diverted the Politics of Envy Unit from investigating what a nasty capitalist company Broken Hill Proprietary, in which Mrs T invested, is. The Unit's report has now been completed, and reveals that BHP is leading oil exploration in disputed waters off East Timor. The Indonesian military regime invaded East Timor in 1975 and has waged a brutal war against the East Timorese people in which up to a third of the population has died. Neither the United Nations nor Britain recognises Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. The British campaign for human rights in Indonesia, Tapol, accuses the Australian government and BHP of legitimising the Indonesian claim to East Timor's territorial waters.

Caring capitalism

Isn't capitalism fun? Now you too can share the joy of getting up the PM's nose by making money in the City — provided you give it all to a good cause. *The* New Statesman *Stock Exchange Collection Can project made a nimble 5 per cent in Week One. And so far Week Two's tip, to buy Booker McConnell, is moving in the right direction. We'll give the final verdict next week to allow for the Easter hiatus. Meanwhile, for Week Three we recommend you sell Britoil (no, you don't have to* have *any shares to sell, your bank manager will explain). Given oil companies' well-known concern for the environment, the suggested beneficiary is Greenpeace. And don't go using money you can't afford to lose.*

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SCRUTINY

Duncan Campbell and Patrick Forbes

RING AROUND THE BASES

New byelaws to hinder peace camps and protestors at controversial nuclear bases round Britain are being created by the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry has just admitted that 19 CND or peace camp sites are already or will soon be subject to special new military laws

QUESTIONED by Liberal MP Archy Kirkwood, Defence Under-Secretary John Lee said last week that the Ministry is planning new regulations for 12 military sites, most of them American bases, in addition to seven bases already covered. The regulations — ordered under the Military Lands Act of 1892 — will make it an offence for anyone to 'distribute or display any handbill, leaflet, sign [or] notice, or affix the same to either side of the perimeter fences.'

At these bases peaceful activity which does not involve trespass or force, such as displaying slogans or weaving doves into the wire, may incur immediate arrest without a warrant, and a fine of up to £100. Anyone refusing to pay the fine can be jailed for up to two weeks.

It will also be an offence to 'enter or leave the Protected Area except by way of an authorised entrance or exit', to attempt to enter at all without permission, or to 'defence any sign, wall, fence [or] pavement' in the Area. The regulations allow any military officer or NCO in uniform to make summary arrests of protestors, a task normally left to British civilian or Ministry of Defence police.

The Military Lands Acts allow the Defence Secretary to make such byelaws without reference to Parliament. Until 1984, the Acts were used almost exclusively to restrict access to firing and bombing ranges, usually on grounds of public safety. About 90 sites are currently covered by the Act.

But the byelaws have recently been extended to cover seven major US or nuclear bases. These are the cruise missiles bases at Greenham Common and Molesworth, and Alconbury (which provides most of the support facilities for Molesworth). Since the start of 1986, new laws have come into effect covering the Polaris missile bases and stores at Faslane and Coulport, the US National Security Agency monitoring centre at Menwith Hill near Harrogate, and Lakenheath and Mildenhall in Suffolk, both major US Air Force bases.

The new regulations proposed by the Ministry also affect the Holy Loch, on the Clyde. Some or all the waters of the Holy Loch will be prohibited to public access under the regulations. Local residents fear that use of the sheltered and attractive loch, a popular sailing and sports centre despite the presence of US Poseidon submarines and their mother ship, will now be restricted to American use only.

Eleven other bases will be covered by Military Lands Acts regulations: Rosyth dockyard; Upper Heyford (F-III bombers); St Mawgan (US nuclear store); Brawdy; Burtonwood and Caerwent (both US arms dumps); Waddington and Boscombe Down; the nuclear weapons research centre at Aldermaston; and the bomb-making Royal Ordnance Factories at Burghfield and Llanishen, Cardiff.

Challenged about the laws banning the display of posters and placards around a prohibited area, the Ministry of Defence has claimed in letters to objectors that 'no obstruction . . . should occur which may obscure sight of unlawful acts which are being or are about to be committed'. The Ministry also claimed that it 'fully recognised that in our democratic society it is important to defend the right of people to express an opinion and our Government have been at pains to reinforce this right on many occasions'. But no evidence was offered to support this astonishing claim. ●

The secret purpose of 20 tunnel gates like this, hidden inside the London Underground system, has been revealed in confidential reports obtained by the *New Statesman*. The people shown above are London Transport engineers, admiring a prototype automatic floodgate. The confidential reports, dated 1969, show that from as early as 1950 the Home Office anticipated that London would be destroyed in any attack on Britain. At first, the government expected that Nagasaki-type atomic bombs would be used, obliterating central London for a distance of 3500 feet from the River Thames. The automatic gates were installed to hold back floodwater from the devastated area so that the rest of the system could still be used.

As late as 1968, the system was extended at government expense by building two gates into the new Victoria Line. Three years ago, London Transport reluctantly admitted to its then paymasters, the GLC, that it was still receiving a secret Ministry of Transport subsidy to keep the system going. But because government policy on civil defence was (and still is) to tell Londoners to stay put in their homes, the existence of gates like this one has been kept secret. They are specifically covered by D Notice no 7, which publication of this article contravenes, asking the press to reveal nothing to Londoners about 'underground floodgates that are not in public view on the London Underground Railways'. The gates were also built so far up the tunnels that they cannot be seen from any station platform, and are not visible from trains

Spy shuffle

CHANGES at the top of British intelligence have led to the appointment of a career MI6 official as Cabinet Office Intelligence Co-ordinator for the first time. Four of Britain's five top spy jobs have now changed hands in less than a year.

The Cabinet Office has admitted to the *NS* that Sir Colin Figures has been appointed as one of the office's four Deputy Secretaries, the rank customarily held by the Intelligence Co-ordinator. Until last year, Figures was the Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, or 'MI6').

Figures replaces ex-diplomat Sir Anthony Duff, who was despatched from the Cabinet Office to polish up MI5's badly dented image. Low morale in the security service follows the Bettany spy trial, and public revelations about its actions in spying on CND and then passing on information which was used by the Conservative Party for party political propaganda.

Figures, 60 last year, was knighted in 1983 after running MI6 for a year, and after a lifetime spent working for the secret service in Jordan, Germany, Austria and Poland. He came to public notice during the celebrations which surrounded the Falklands War. Both he and the new MI5 director, Duff, are said to be held in particular favour by the Prime Minister.

The Cabinet Office Intelligence Co-ordinator is responsible for controlling the intelligence and security service budget, now around £1 billion a year. Once the Prime Minister and civil service chiefs have agreed the budget, it is broken up into 'line items', which can then be hidden in other government departments' budgets.

Most of the money to pay for British intelligence is concealed from accountability to MPs inside different sections of the Defence Ministry budget. The Secret Vote, which MPs are supposed to think is the intelligence services budget, is in fact merely their 'slush fund' — the amount of *unaudited* cash they receive. The Secret Vote for 1986/87, included in last month's Budget, was £92 million.

Since the debacle over the failure to predict the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands, the Co-ordinator has also controlled the Joint Intelligence Committee, which collates and assesses all incoming intelligence.

The government has also appointed a new Director General of Intelligence to take command of the Defence Intelligence Staff at the Ministry of Defence. He is retired Lieutenant General Derek Boorman, described by defence sources as an official 'smoothie'. At SIS itself, the new Chief is Chris Curwen, another career intelligence officer.

The only top British intelligence job which has not changed hands in the last year is that of the director of GCHQ Cheltenham, Sir Peter Marychurch. But Marychurch continues to be the focus of the government's attempt to ban trade unions at the electronic intelligence centre. ●

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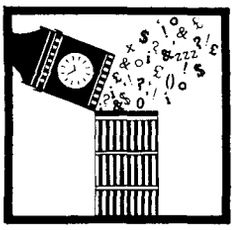

Fulham: Tories and SDP fight for second place

PETER KELLNER

WHEN DENIS HEALEY fought Michael Foot in 1980 for the leadership of the Labour Party, one of Healey's most active supporters was Donald Dewar, a Glasgow MP. Some Labour MPs thought Dewar terribly brave to take this stand — for his London pad consisted of a room in Foot's house in Hampstead. A group of Labour MPs were discussing Dewar's predicament when one of them intervened: 'No one in their right mind,' he said, 'votes for their landlord'.

In normal by-elections the Alliance candidate exploits the anti-landlord effect by banging on about how dreadful the local Labour (or Tory) council is at maintaining the housing estates or keeping the street lights working. This tactic is not open to Roger Liddle, the SDP candidate in next week's by-election at Fulham. Since 1978 the Liberals have supported Conservative rule in Hammersmith. Where spending has been cut, or services not delivered, the blame lies partly at the door of the local Liberals.

Labour's Nick Raynsford can, by contrast, point to the council's failings —rents up by almost 60 per cent in the past four years, for example — to spray criticism at both his opponents. Joy was perverse, but unconfined at Labour's Fulham offices on Monday when word came that Raynsford had been stuck in a lift on the Gibbs Green estate, and had to be rescued by firemen. Raynsford asked for details about how often lifts broke down on local council estates. The latest figure turned out to be 90 times a week — and that was *after* the operation of the lift services had been privatised. Frank Dobson, one of the London MPs helping with the campaign, beamed at the news: 'Someone up there clearly wants us to win'.

The SDP's campaign team is clearly frustrated by having to defend what local Liberals do — and by Labour copying traditional Alliance 'pavement politics' tactics. 'In Fulham, Labour is blaming the council for the ills of the constituency', one of the SDP's campaign managers told me, 'but when they fight elections where Labour runs the council, they blame the government for everything'.

It's a fair point. No doubt lifts break down in the Peoples' Republic of Islington; and there are plenty of unlit alleys in Ted Knight's Lambeth. But by-election campaigns are largely about identifying particular strengths (in your own candidate) and weaknesses (in others) and trying to exploit them, even though the selfsame qualities may be distributed quite differently among the parties in other by-elections.

Labour regards one of Raynsford's strengths as being the fact he is local. A local hi-fi dealer recently turned up at the party's headquarters demanding money. He had apparently tried to extract money from a customer at home, found nobody in, but had seen one of Labour's campaign slogans in the window: 'Nick Raynsford lives here'.

During the next few days Labour activists will distribute one of Labour's most attractive ever election leaflets. It is printed in full colour (the first time for Labour in a by-election, I was told) on good quality paper (rare enough). 'Nick Raynsford knows what he'll be doing on Thursday', it says on the cover. Turn inside and you find: 'Nick Raynsford is the only candidate from a major party with a vote in this election. Why? Because he lives in Fulham'. Next to those words is a picture of Raynsford crossing the road with his two young children — both born in the West London Hospital.

The Tories have been sufficiently disturbed by the 'local' element of Labour's campaigning to respond with a leaflet saying that their man, Matthew Carrington, was born in Fulham and has been active in London politics for 20 years.

BOTH THE TORIES and the Alliance base part of their appeal on the claim that theirs is the only candidate who can beat Labour. The SDP's leaflet for wavering Conservative supporters concedes that 'at the moment Labour are the favourites', while insisting that 'the Conservatives cannot possibly hang on to Fulham . . . [but] the SDP/Liberal Alliance could stop Labour'. The Conservatives, meanwhile, win the award for the worst pun of the campaign — a leaflet headed 'Vote Race Special', over a picture of two rowing crews, and the caption: 'Fulham set for photo finish: Matthew Carrington gets set to overhaul Labour in last week'. And on the back page: 'the SDP campaign is already in decline'.

The reasoning behind the SDP and Tory tactics is clear. Opinion polls during the first fortnight of the campaign showed Labour holding steady at around 40 per cent, with the Conservatives at 31-35 and the SDP 20-25. If the SDP is to stand a chance of winning, it must first squeeze Tory support and push Carrington into third place. Then the Tory vote might crumble and 'soft' Labour voters could switch to the SDP knowing that the Tories were out of the race.

Equally, the Tories could just about bear to lose the seat to Labour, provided that the SDP stayed third. If Carrington were to slip behind both his main opponents (as at Brecon and Radnor), it would be terrible for the party. Hence the need to talk the by-election up as a *Conservative*-Labour race.

Part of the Tories' strategy involves poor-mouthing the opinion polls — not your crude 'we don't believe in polls' stuff, but something more sophisticated. According to the 1981 census, 34 per cent of Fulham's households were owner-occupied. Since then the figure has risen, partly because of council house-sales, but more because previously private-rented homes have been sold for conversion to owner-occupation.

For example, local estate agents Friend and Falcke are advertising this week 'a spacious family house needing some work to create a superb property'. The asking price for this four-bedroom pile of bricks, mortar and hassle is £275,000. Or you can buy an already-converted 'luxury' two-bedroom flat for £127,000. The people moving into these finds of homes are natural Tories — part of Britain's tiny group to have benefited from tax cuts while Mrs Thatcher has been in office. The polls are using out-of-date housing data, say the Tories, and underestimating Carrington's support.

A quick call to the pollsters shows that this is not so. *Newsnight*'s poll broadcast last week had an owner-occupied figure of 44 per cent. A few days earlier in the *Sunday Telegraph*, Gallup's figure for home-owners was 43 per cent. These have been the two polls that have reported the biggest Labour leads to date — and they *have* taken post-1981 demographic shifts into account.

The party that has found Fulham hardest-going is the SDP. Precisely because the constituency is becoming increasingly polarised between poorly-treated council tenants and wealthy home-owners, and because the Liberals are partly responsible for local council policy, two of the main groups of Alliance protest-votes are missing: tenants who grumble at the council and the suburban middle-classes who grumble at Mrs Thatcher.

David Owen went out of his way early in the campaign to play down Roger Liddle's chances, pointing out that in 1983 the Alliance won just 18 per cent of the vote — eight points lower than the national average — and saying that Fulham is 560th on the list of Alliance targets. Labour suspect that all this is part of an SDP strategy to depress early expectations in order to exaggerate the significance of any late shift to the Alliance — thus creating a last-minute bandwagon.

If they pull it off and Roger Liddle becomes Fulham's new MP, it would be the most spectacular Alliance by-election victory since the SDP was formed. My guess is they won't win, but might come second: but my pre-by-election guesses are notoriously bad, so there are no money-back offers if this one proves wrong. □

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ALLIANCE SHOWS ITS TRUE BLUE COLOURS

The 10 April Fulham parliamentary by-election will hold up for scrutiny the cosy Alliance-Tory coalition on the local council, says CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

THERE ARE TWO Alliances in Fulham — the now familiar national Liberal/SDP Alliance and the Liberal/Tory coalition which controls Hammersmith & Fulham council. It is a hanging — as well as a hung — council, with tough policies on privatisation and cutting services hat make it indistinguishable from nearby Tory-controlled authorities like Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster.

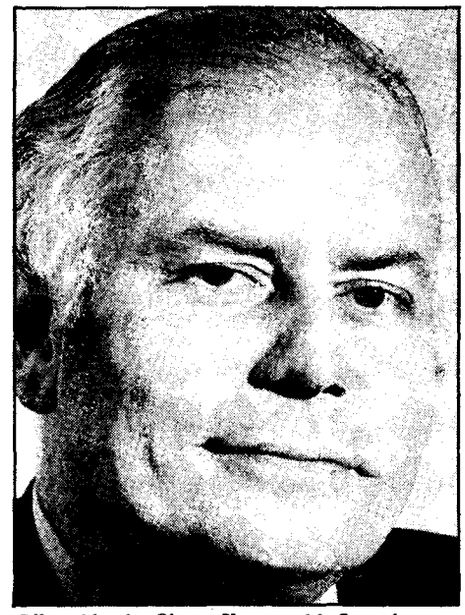
The council has just reduced its rates by 16.5 per cent, the second biggest cut in London. It did this thanks to money out of the GLC reserves, extra rate support grant from the government and a package of cuts amounting to about £1 million. A further £1.3 million is to be generated by a £1.30 average increase in council rents, twice the government recommended figure.

Since 1978, two, and then three, Liberals have held the political balance and formed a coalition with the Tories, siding only once with Labour out of 314 votes in council meetings since then. The 'coalition' is set down formally in a four year agreement. According to the Association of Liberal Concillors 'such a lengthy arrangement is unique amongst all 80 hung councils in Britain'.

Currently, although there are 24 Labour councillors to 23 Tory, all the committee chairs are held by the Conservatives, with the exception of two granted to the Liberals as reward for their support — the Key Finance and General Purposes, chaired by Liberal leader Simon Knott, and the Borough Construction Board, chaired by local builder, Robert Mulcahy. The Board runs the council's direct labour organisation and both it, and the social services which Knott chaired for six years until 1984, have seen the sharp end of Liberal policies.

The Social Services Department has been in a mess for a number of years. It was severely criticised in 1982 over the death of three-year-old Shirley Woodcock, who was in care and died from brain injuries while being looked after by foster parents. The then Director of Social Services wrote to Knott to say that lack of resources was having 'a profound impact on the department's ability to cope'. Matters have not improved. In December 1982, there were 111 unallocated cases; this had grown to 189 by January 1986.

Other evidence of the department's continued inability to cope is that a third of social enquiry reports on children required by the courts are not being provided on time and since last spring social work offices have closed in the afternoons. Last week the department once again came under severe criticism over an



Liberal leader Simon Knott — his finest hour was charging pensioners for home help

advert describing a six year old girl in need of fostering as 'provocative' and 'sexually aware'.

The department's reputation is such that it has been impossible to find a director. The current head, Bruce Cova, is an environmental health inspector, seconded to run social services on a year's contract. In response to an independent report on the Woodcock case published in 1984, the council said it would be introducing 'a far-reaching programme of action' to deal with the deficiencies. Yet, overall, the cuts have continued, with the social services budget being reduced in real terms by nearly 6 per cent since 1982.

Simon Knott's finest hour as social services chair was over the introduction of charges for home help. Pensioners and people with disabilities in receipt of the full attendance allowance and in need of a daily home help were charged £10 per week. There were protests, with a number of old people refusing to pay. Although these charges were first introduced in 1983, when Knott was chair, he now claims that 'he managed to prevent wider home help charges from being introduced' and 'that he is against all such changes'.

THE BOROUGH BUILDING Board, headed by Knott's fellow Liberal Robert Mulcahy, has presided over the virtual winding-up of the council's direct labour organisation, with a reduction in the workforce from 516 in 1982 to 183 now. Seven out of eight works depots have been closed.

Simon Knott's justification for being part of this coalition is that 'I have had eight years experience of power in local government. What I don't know about local government, you can write down on a postage stamp'. As to what specific policies he has managed to push through, he referred to his own Broadway Ward 'which is littered with tenants' halls', a claim which Labour councillors admit is quite true. He was less forthcoming about any national Liberal policies which he had managed to put into effect. 'I represent Broadway ward' he said in response to our question on national policy. In fact, the Liberals on the council voted in favour of GLC abolition agaist their own national policy.

In the light of the rate cut, Knott accepts that he is more interested in saving money than providing services: 'I represent my constituents' income. The rate cut will help the 26 per cent of pensioners in my ward more than anything. My priority is to keep the rates down and meet government spending targets.'

Along with cutting services and jobs, the council's main theme has been privatisation. Two years ago, it become the first council to privatise all its transport fleet, which local trade unionists say has created extra costs through unnecessary servicing. Even less successful was the attempt to 'contract out' town hall catering. Sutcliffe's, the successful bidder, promptly offered employment to only nine of the 17 catering staff made redundant. However, Sucliffe's failed to hold on to the contract when it came up for renewal last year because its proposals of 12 per cent menu price increases, together with a 90 per cent mark up on the cost of food purchased, proved too much for the coalition to swallow. A new firm, Gardner and Merchant, took over on 1 April.

Privatisation has been a key issue in housing, too. Council policy already goes well beyond the 'right to buy' legislation, with empty houses being offered for sale rather than let even though the number of homeless families in bed and breakfast has quadrupled to 156 from 39 two years ago. The latest wheeze is to sell off whole estates. Fulham Court, one of the area's largest estates with 372 flats, is being cleared for sale, breaking an election promise to tenants that it would be renovated. However, decanting has been slower than expected because of resistance by tenants, which means that, with the elections pending, only one of the nine blocks is ready for sale.

The council is imposing a convenant on the terms of the sale to ensure that all the remaining blocks on the estate will be sold into owner occupation (*NS* 30 August 1985 and 31

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January). The intention is to sell the block to Barratts for £670,150 with a similar clause that would be binding on any future council's policy. This was agreed by the housing committee on 19 March but the plan has been blocked by a court injunction obtained two days later by a tenant on the estate. A final decision by the court is due on 28 April, 10 days before the 8 May council elections.

The council isn't building any new houses, because all potential development land has been sold. Hammersmith & Fulham's love affair with Barratt's has extended to giving it planning permission for luxury housing on the Drayton Paperworks site in Fulham, which increased the land's value by an estimated £1.5 million overnight.

The council's most recent embarrassment was over the proposed sale of Stewarts Lodge, an old people's home in Lambeth, to Associated Nursing Services for £550,000. Mayor Kim Howe claimed that it was being sold because, with only 29 residents, the home was not fully occupied. However, after an injunction obtained by the Labour group and members of GMBATU, the municpal workers union, council leader John Putnam announced last week that the proposal was being dropped.

Simon Knott, who had supported the scheme, told us: 'I thought it would be a way of saving money because private homes qualify for money from the DHSS, which council homes do not'. But Labour councillor Ian Harrison retorts: 'He never said that when it was discussed in council meetings.'

The Alliance's poor initial canvass returns in Fulham are attributed locally to its role in council politics. Given the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham's record, Labour will be hoping for more. □

Christian Wolmar writes for the Observer.

THE RICH GETS RICHER

IT'S BECOMING THREE NATIONS, MR DISRAELI

Who said 'a Conservative government is an organised hypocrisy'? That's right, future Conservative PM Disraeli in 1845 — the same year he coined the term 'Two Nations' to describe Britain's division into rich and poor. JOHN RENTOUL and ANDREW LUMSDEN on how seven years of Thatcherism must be turning Disraeli in his grave

THERE ARE NOW Three Nations, not Two, and Nigel Lawson's 18 March Budget was once again not just for the rich but for that other, discreet Nation, the super rich. The Three Nations are the *haves*, the *have nots* and the *have lots* — a social and economic elite now in its seventh consecutive year of reasserting itself.

We all know all about the other Two Nations: the underclass of the poor and the mass unemployed on low and no pay, and the comfortably-off majority in reasonably secure jobs whose pay has consistently outstripped inflation since 1981 as a group and, more substantially, as individuals.

But 'Two Nation' rhetoric, whether coded Wetspeak, Alliance flannel or full-blooded class hatred, has concealed the extent of the changes in British society since about 1979. It implies that any state-sponsored transfer of resources to the poor has to come from the *modestly* well-off. It implies that there is a continuity of interests between the middle class and the 'aristocracy' of the very rich — Two Nation rhetoric actually provides a cover for that 'aristocracy' to hide behind.

The Third Nation, as we're naming it, isn't precisely the same as the old aristocracy with its uneven jumble of titles and landed interests — though old titled wealth *is* having a boom. It's an inter-weaving of the old inheritors with the new capital owners from 'industry' and the City. And it is on a drip feed from above, as the Royals breed exponentially, creating a burgeoning cast of role models and status enforcers (*NS* last week).

What distinguishes the 'Third Nation' from the nation below it is inheritance and the scale of its capital. Not since the 1920s has it been possible to talk of a leisured class, but what we're seeing is the reassembling of a culturally homogenous grouping who own enough capital to live on. At today's rates of interest (on government securities) and — crucially — today's tax rates, a person needs to hold £111,000-worth of capital (in addition to their home) to secure an income equivalent to average earnings, and maintain the value of their capital against inflation. The sum is: average earnings in 1985 of £7,930 less £2,400 mortgage/rent, at interest rates of around 10 per cent with inflation at 5 per cent. In order to guess at the numbers of the potentially-leisured rich, try Inland Revenue estimates of the distribution of wealth in the UK, 1983, *Inland Revenue Statistics 1985*.

There are now at least 600,000 such individuals in Britain, and what is more, they can pass on their wealth — untouched by the tax person's hands — for generation after generation. Or as Mrs Thatcher put it last week, their wealth holdings will 'topple like a cascade down the line of the family'.

As the flow of apologist rhetoric might warn anyone — from Thatcher's 'cascade' to Heseltine's 'caring capitalism' — grotesque inducements are increasingly being offered not only to the re-creation of a hereditary bourgeoisie or 'gentry' whose children will soon be leisured if they choose, but to the perpetuation *ad infinitum* of vast fortunes. Even the *Financial Times* following this March's Budget took the trouble to estimate that Earl Grosvenor, the Duke of Westminster's heir, 'will save a minimum of £600 million at a stroke as a result of Mr Lawson's statement'.

The gravy-train starts at the very top. Nobody in public life wastes any breath on the Queen's personal exemption from every inheritance tax on the presumption that she maintains her 'state' with it. It is less noticed that she's free to create brand-new wealthy individuals out of any of her relatives, and naturally does so. It must have been the untaxed fortune that paid for the Andrew—Fergie £25,000 engagement ring, and if it could do that, it will certainly do a great deal more for the couple after marriage. Major-scale tax-avoidance in Britain begins with the Head of State, 'by custom', and a millionaire-controlled popular press incites approval.

NIGEL LAWSON'S abolition of Capital Transfer Tax (CTT) a fortnight ago, returning to an entirely avoidable death duty, was in fact mostly symbolic, of cultural significance in asserting the soaring social value being placed on 'family money'. The Conservatives had already 'drawn the teeth' of CTT. Even in 1979, when its dismantling

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began, it only had dentures and a rather weak jaw, for when Denis Healey under Labour created it in 1975, he departed from his 'squeezing the rich until the pips squeak' prospectus by taxing lifetime transfers at a lower rate and allowing reliefs for farms, small businesses and anything else rich people might own.

Taxes on capital have not yielded significant revenue since the 1964-70 Labour government, although estate duty was once an important source of government income. In 1979 Capital Gains Tax and CTT produced only 1.3 per cent of total tax revenue (including rates). Last year they produced less than 1.2 per cent. As the indexation rules of 1982 and 1985 (which made capital gains taxable only if they exceeded the rate of inflation) take effect, the yield of CGT is expected to decline by up to 75 per cent, according to the Institute of Fiscal Studies. The replacement of CTT by Inheritance Tax will reduce yields from capital taxation further. Compare 1908: estate duty was then 29 per cent of Inland Revenue receipts. Even in 1928 it was 20 per cent, and as late as 1968 it was 7 per cent. Last year it was 1.5 per cent.

Even before Lawson abolished it, CTT could be regarded 'like an infectious illness' — advice of Professor Anthony Mellows in *Harpers and Queen*, January 1985. 'One only suffers if one fails to take precautions. A middle-aged couple can transfer to their children, grandchildren and others assets worth nearly £1 million without paying any Capital Transfer Tax. If they are particularly ambitious to defeat the Chancellor, they can increase that to a figure approaching £2 million.'

Professor Harbury and Dr Hitchens, in their definitive study of inheritance and inequality, conclude: 'Between 60 and 80 per cent of those who died rich in the third quarter of the present century owed their wealth to inheritances and the rest to entrepreneurship and luck.' (*Inheritance and Wealth Inequality in Britain*, 1979.) They conclude: 'Inheritance is the major determinant of wealth inequality. Regression analysis attributed some two-thirds of the inequality in the distribution of wealth in 1973 to inheritance. The proportions of top wealth leavers since the mid-1950s who were preceded by rich fathers was on what might be regarded as conservative assumptions in excess of 60 per cent . . .'

We have now had seven years (1979-86) of what Thatcher likes to pretend is a tax-shift away from 'socialist' refusal to let 'the people' be 'propertied' towards rewards for self-help and initiative. *Before* she began, the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth in 1977 and 1979 (reports 5 and 7), calculated what the distribution of wealth would be if it were only possible to own wealth through saving — but with existing unequal incomes. The share of the top 1 per cent would be between 3 and 7 per cent of total wealth (depending on assumptions about earnings and interest rates). As it is, the top 1 per cent actually owns nearly 20 per cent (including private pensions, which are a form of saving). The difference is the significance of inheritance. As we said last week, the *ancien regime* is coming back. □

PLUTONIUM ECONOMY

THE ENQUIRY IS A FARCE

ROB EDWARDS on the latest Dounreay sham

IN RECENT YEARS the nuclear industry in Britain has forfeited public trust. The extraordinary and little-known story of how Dounreay was originally chosen as the place to develop the fast breeder reactor shows that it never deserved that trust in the first place.

In 1953 the government's top nuclear scientists were worried about the 'remote possibility' that an accident in a fast breeder, a radically different type of nuclear reactor from those currently in commercial use in Britain, could cause a small nuclear explosion. They therefore decided that the first prototype should be sited as far away from population centres as possible.

Dounreay in Caithness on the northernmost coast of Scotland soon became their favourite choice. Assuming that the worst that could happen was that just one per cent of the reactor's lethal radioactivity could leak out of its protective steel sphere, they made a rough estimate of the number of people who lived close to the site. Then, according to the man in charge of the project at the time, the late Lord Hinton, they hit a snag — and found a novel way round it.

They discovered, 'to our dismay' that 'the site did not comply with the safety distances specified by the health physicists. That was easily put right: with the assumption of a 99 per cent containment the site was unsatisfactory, so we assumed, more realistically, a 99.9 per cent containment and by doing this we established the fact that the site was perfect.'

The mentality of our nuclear decision-makers today is just as devious and just as dangerous. In their desperate attempt to launch Britain into a plutonium-powered future by building Europe's first fast reactor fuel reprocessing plant at Dounreay, they have subverted democracy itself.

The fast reactor is designed simultaneously to burn and breed plutonium. In theory, this greatly extends the amount of useful energy that can be extracted from the raw material of nuclear power, uranium. It has always been the industry's great hope.

The last Labour government promised that any plans to build a commercial fast reactor in Britain would be subject to a wide ranging Sizewell-style public inquiry — a promise that has been subsequently reiterated by the Tory government. But in 1982, it announced that there was no hope of actually ordering a commercial fast reactor in Britain until at least the 'earlier part of the next century'.

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Dounreay, the industry turned to Europe. It began secretly lobbying for the dubious privilege of building the dirty end of the business, the reprocessing plant which will extract plutonium from the spent fuel from the fast reactors planned for France, Germany and (eventually) Britain. Last year the British government trumpeted its support for the planning application by the UK Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels to build such a plant at Dounreay.

A LARGE SCALE fast reactor reprocessing plant is just as crucial a step towards the plutonium economy as the commercial fast reactor itself — and it could be even more dangerous. Yet the government has decided to restrict the remit of the Dounreay inquiry. It has implied that the broader policy issues will have to wait until later when a generic fast reactor inquiry is set up. The cart, in other words, has been deliberately planted directly in front of the horse. It is a classic official ploy clearly aimed at sneaking a fundamental policy decision past a net too frail and small to catch it.

The result is that the Dounreay inquiry, under the Scottish Office's chief reporter, Sandy Bell, cannot possibly conduct a full and proper examination of the issue. It will not examine the need for the scheme in the first place, or its economics, or its projected role in Britain's energy policy. It will not consider the extent to which the plant could aid the proliferation of nuclear weapons. For the sake of an easy life, Bell may decide to listen politely to evidence on some of these matters, but there is no doubt that he will ignore them all in his final report.

Even the topics where scrutiny is promised will suffer from the restricted remit. Objectors will find it difficult to question the official health and safety criteria governing the operation of the plant, radioactive discharges and transport. Even examination of the high incidence of leukaemia cases in the immediate vicinity of Dounreay since 1979 (five where barely one would be expected) may suffer.

Aware that the credibility of his inquiry is under serious attack, Bell has gone to great lengths to establish his independence and authority. Since postponing its start by seven weeks in response to objectors' complaints last year, he has continued to put pressure on the nuclear industry to provide more information, even to the extent of flying two leading objectors from Orkney to Edinburgh for a special meeting last month.

But even his barely concealed contempt for the industry's 'unhelpful communication' cannot disguise the political reality. The Dounreay inquiry is a monumental irrelevance. It is the least appropriate way of discussing the most important nuclear power policy issue that has faced Britain for decades.

Ironically, even if Bell and the Scottish Office end up approving the development, it may never be built here. France is drawing up plans to build the plant at Marcoule in the south of the country and is putting together a powerful competing case. Dounreay's future will not be decided in Thurso, Edinburgh or even Westminster: it will ultimately be determined by events across the English Channel. □

POLITICAL BORES

LET'S BOYCOTT AIRTIME MPs

Could we please have real politics on the box, begs HILARY KINGSLEY

REPEAT AFTER ME: every politician likes being on television. Now repeat after me: politicians control television.

Now ask yourself this question: why are there so many political programmes — they fill about 11 hours across the network every week? Now look at the viewing figures for them — about five millions for *Question Time*, the liveliest, and about 1.75 million for *Weekend World*, the smuggest.

The truth is that politics are less exciting to the average viewer than documentaries about water beetles. But the government appoints the governors of the BBC; it picks the members of the IBA and it decides how much of the revenue from TV licences the BBC may keep. So you can see why the BBC and ITV companies treat politicos as deeply important people. This respect leads to deeply boring political programmes and perhaps helps make us the apathetic mob we are. ▷

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How can things be changed? We won't alter the way broadcasting authorities are set up in a hurry. But we could vote politicians off our screens as performers until they brush up their acts. I give politicians up for Lent — it covers Budget time when television is awash with jargon-spouting MPs and worthy interviewers heavy with the responsibility of it all. I'd like to extend my fast, to see a mass switch-off, a moratorium until the general election next year.

We could read about parliament and the major political events in the dailies and weeklies. We could tolerate politicians briefly in the TV news. But any politician in a studio chair — CUT!

What's wrong with political programmes varies with the particular programme and interviewer. But as a rule our politicians seem unable to talk on television like people with strong views. They talk party political talk. Ask anyone who works on these programmes. It seems the guest MPs, invited along for fees ranging between £50 and £100, say one thing in the warm-up chat. When the cameras start they say another. It's not so much that they alter 'facts', rather that their whole view of what politics is about seems to change.

The director of one serious discussion series put it this way: 'When they arrive and chat over a drink, I'm often surprised at how pleasant and amusing they are. Last week a very important Tory was in being controversial — though not disloyal — before the recording. Once we started he switched completely. He wouldn't say what he'd said before. So often we're aching for someone to say something they actually believe — but it's as if they're looking through the cameras laughing at us.'

The editor of another discussion series said: 'It's a constant struggle to prod politicians out of their party political way of thinking, to stop them being pompous. We often have a backbencher or at least a more junior minister on the programme rather than a minister because the conditioning hasn't been so great'.

Makers of TV programmes have their own professional reasons for wanting politicians to perform better. But even the director of publicity for the Conservative Party, Harvey Thomas, who trains politicians for television work, says: 'They do lousily. I wish we could get politicians of all parties to sit down and listen to themselves ranting and raving in parliament and on television simply not getting their messages across. They make politics irrelevant to people.'

It's not as though the programme makers don't try. Putting together one weekly discussion programme usually involves separate recordings of interviews with politicians. The form is: record for about twenty minutes, have transcripts made, then piece together the interesting points. Result — usually about a minute and a half's material.

IS IT THAT the politicians around at the moment are an outstandingly dull bunch then? Mrs Thatcher may be many things but she's not dull — ask the impressionists. Roy Hattersley, Shirley Williams are not dull. Denis Healey, who does turns on everything from *TV-am* to *Saturday Live*, is not dull.

'I'd like to see a mass switch-off until the general election'

Harriet Harman is not dull. She said: 'Television producers are creatures of habit. They turn to the same page in their address books, so we see the same few faces time and again. They're stuck in habits in terms of their programmes too. They make the issues of politics inaccessible and separate from everyday life — it's always something apart.

'I don't watch the so-called serious politics programmes where it's clear they're aiming at intellectual men. I try but I've found them insufferable. The serious end is worse than the lighter end. I'm quite a fan of *Daytime*, the Thames afternoon show and I like John Craven's *Newsround*. I think they reckon only women and kids are watching so they know they have to keep to the point and keep it interesting.'

Harriet Harman thinks Sarah Kennedy a better interviewer than the 'heavy' men for the same reason: during the day, it's the interests of the audience, not the status of politicians or interviewers, which shapes the coverage of politics. Thus she finds an audience of local sixthformers more challenging than the *Newsnight* team.

The audience striking back probably accounts for the success of BBC1's *Question Time*. Its audiences tend to be well-mixed in terms of age and accent with a fair proportion of women (though unlike radio's *Any Questions* the show is fixed in London.) Real people with real questions tend to expect real answers and sometimes they get them. With professional interviewers it's different.

The big-timers — David Dimbleby, Peter Jay, Brian Walden among them — are intelligent men who understand how the political game is played. They don't want to 'ask the questions a child would ask' — that rule for mere reporters — because it would detract from *their* image.

There's a myth about the 'tough' interviewer who can put a politician on the spot. Any politician worth his (it's usually his) rosette knows how to turn some questions around, to evade others and to smile sincerely while lying through his teeth. A 'tough' interviewer won't unsettle him, for he's still playing the game. Someone who's not in awe of our political processes might.

Brian Walden, the soon to retire host of ITV's prestige-laden *Weekend World*, who has made a fortune not being an MP, has a reputation for giving politicians a hard time. I've never seen him getting under someone's guard in the way, say, Tony Benn upset Roy Jenkins on *Question Time* the other week. Norman Tebbit has even come out and said he likes an aggressive interview. He must believe he comes off best under attack.

Peter Jay has the background and stature to talk to the most illustrious star of Westminster as an equal. In his severe, humourless way, he does press his points and his interviewees often bridle. But is this style good for politics? On Jay's *The Week in Politics* (Chanel 4) MPs still waffle warily as though they fear someone from head office is taking notes, and the viewer simply learns how knowledgeable and fearless the interviewer is.

Sir Robin Day, waiting De Gaulle-like to be called as the BBC's next Director General, is another with a reputation for toughness. He can certainly *insist*, and he can do it in a very entertaining way. But I doubt he strikes fear into many political hearts. And there's always a sense of respect for an MP. They don't find themselves chivvied and shut up in the way women journalists often are. He may be stern with an MP. To journalist Jane Reed a few weeks ago he was simply rude.

IN GERMANY, France and America I've seen political programmes where the issues are treated as part of everyone's lives and politicians do no one a favour by appearing on television. The nearest to this I've seen lately was the Breakfast Time exchange on the morning after the Budget between the Treasury's John MacGreggor and Roy Hattersley. Frank Bough was the host and his 'come off it' manner produced an argument which was several steps up from the party political broadcasts.

But my big complaint is that I can never rely on television to clarify the dense political situations which arise. *Panorama* can produce an interview with the Prime Minister memorable only for Mrs Thatcher's refusal to regret anything. *Question Time* can produce knockabout fun but the level of discussion rarely rises above that of a school debate. *This Week Next Week* picks the best subjects, pulls in an impressive medley of politicians and puts the right questions to them. But it bores by allowing everyone to burble on too long.

Weekend World can bwing Bwian's reports — like Workers' Education Association lectures — natty graphs and little smiles between the pauses. But is there a drearier way to spend a Sunday lunchtime?

With alternative comedians cropping up everywhere, we might have hoped for the rebirth of political satire. I had this notion of a series which would feature politicians being outspoken, giving us the sort of stuff they concoct for end of conference parties.

But people in television tell me satire's a dead duck. Politics is boring, comedy producers say. They've been watching the same political programmes I have. □

Hilary Kingsley writes on television for the Mirror

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MEDIA

When Voices have nothing to say

ANNE KARPF

FOR THOSE who have missed it so far, there is still time to catch Channel 4's late night Thursday angst slot. The enigma of contemporary society is thrashed out, the alienation of the modern citizen bemoaned. Once, Channel 4 purported to draw on those parts of our culture that other channels didn't. But any vestigial claims to innovation, at least on gender matters, are well and truly blown by the simple fact that over six weeks this *Voices* series fields 16 male speakers, and just one woman. After a decade and a half in which feminist scholarship and practice have challenged received ideas in almost every discipline, a flagship series discussing contemporary society fails even to acknowledge its existence. Commissioning editor Michael Kustow and the programme-makers should be crimson with embarrassment.

They probably aren't, of course, even though eight of Channel 4's 25 senior managers are women, so they must know of the existence of this other species. Over at the BBC, on the other hand, things are much worse. Last year's Sims Report on Women in BBC Management found six women and 159 men in the top grade. It set about examining this imbalance, and making recommendations to correct it. The BBC has just issued a plan of action in response.

The Sims Report was a curious mix of the liberal and the radical. Monica Sims, former Controller of Radio 4, interviewed 89 BBC women about factors inhibiting their advance. Among them was the BBC's (literal) clubbishness: meagre are the prospects for those women who can't linger after hours to politic in the BBC Club, but have to speed off to shop or whip up a meal. One TV reporter was surprised that the BBC had no creche 'when it has a bar in every building, providing a large debilitating drinking pool subsidised for the ill-health of its employees'. Age discrimination is in operation, too, since the key period for both promotion and childbirth is 25-35. By 40, you're thought past it, career-wise.

Sims came out against positive discrimination, but made 19 recommendations, including the appointment of a Women's Employment Officer for two years, a regular 'audit' for senior staff, and special training courses for women. Among her more radical suggestions was that senior appointments — editors and heads of departments — should be held for limited terms only, so that older men don't block promotion for younger women. She also advocated flexible hours, part-time working, and job-sharing, and wanted the BBC to consider parental leave.

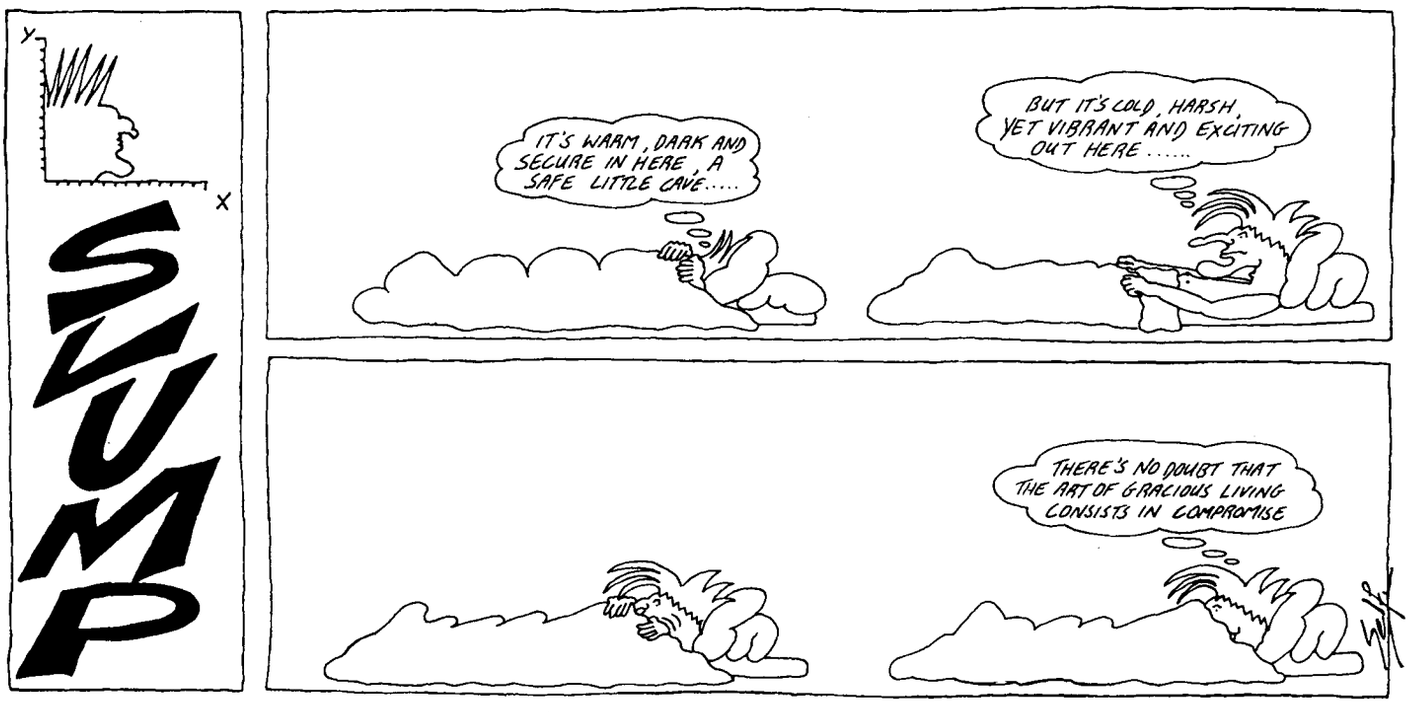
But the trade union BETA (Broadcasting and Entertainment Trades Alliance) argued that her recommendations — though important — wouldn't lead to a significant change. The main reason for the lack of women in senior management, said BETA, wasn't that women left to have children, but was the lack of women in junior management, for which the BBC's recruitment policy is to blame. Far fewer women get onto training courses or get attachments to other departments, and especially culpable are the BBC's notorious appointment boards, hotbeds of sexism. But if you reach one of those, you're lucky. Very senior posts, as Sims noted but made little of, never get advertised: they pass by grace and favour, mainly from men to men. Yet Sims said that it was beyond her brief to make specific recommendations on appointments.

Now the BBC has responded to Sims. It has gone for the equal opportunities officer, the career audit of senior staff, a pilot management course for women, and other new initiatives. It rejects limited terms for senior posts and positive discrimination, will publish guidelines on flexible working, and won't introduce parental leave unless there's government legislation.

Though the BBC has described these changes as a vigorous commitment to equal opportunities, and they are a start, they're only really tinkering. BETA regrets that the Corporation has peremptorily decided what it's going to do, rather than consulted and negotiated with the unions.

What the BBC, like most other public and private organisations, needs is a change of ethos: it's time to wake up to the fact that the image of the putative good worker, free of any extraneous commitments except an overriding obsession with the job, never fitted many men and most women. It may seem fanciful to imagine such things at a time of cuts, Thatcherism, and Real Lives, but if public service broadcasting means anything, shouldn't the BBC aim at being a progressive, innovative employer?

In the meantime, women outside and inside the media will have to continue to campaign both about their representation and employment, A useful tool is the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom's new booklet *Women in Focus* with guidelines for eliminating media sexism (£1.50 from CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1 3DG). And *Voices*, I suggest, should be renamed *Men's Voices*.


Y
X
SUMP
IT'S WARM, DARK AND SECURE IN HERE, A SAFE LITTLE CAVE.....
BUT IT'S COLD, HARSH, YET VIBRANT AND EXCITING OUT HERE.....
THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT THE ART OF GRACIOUS LIVING CONSISTS IN COMPROMISE

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DIARY

David Edgar

The case of the two Manchester students, allegedly harassed, persecuted and assaulted by the city police following their complaints about brutality during the anti-Leon Brittan demonstration in March last year, will come as less of a shock to those who have past acquaintance with the force up there. My experience goes back to my own student days and a tiny demonstration in support of the French students and workers, then engaged in a well-publicised attempt to pose an irrefutable challenge to capitalist state power. Having made our feelings on this matter well known to some suitable city centre target (a trade mission or consulate, as I recall, if not Air France), our intrepid band was en route back to the students' union when it was more or less ambushed by its escort, with a number knocked about and several arrested. Extensive thought was given over the next few days as to what would happen to the Manchester constabulary, in both the general and the specific, come the great day — a project to which Steven Shaw and Sarah Hollis have greater cause than we did to contribute.

○

As Granada reminded us recently by reshowing its famous *World In Action* on the March '68 anti-Vietnam war demonstration in Grosvenor Square, Manchester was then seen as one of the most significant British outposts of the world communist conspiracy. It's no surprise therefore that when the *News of the World* printed its severally-parted exposé of the worldwide youth plot, it gave Manchester's then leading militant pride of place in its list of the key ringleaders. Sadly, the hacks had got it wrong, as the subversive concerned had left Manchester for pastures metropolitan a good twelvemonth before. But for us card-carrying ultra-leftists, the real hilarity was occasioned not by his absence but his identity. Who could think, we scoffed, that anybody could be subverted, recruited, organised or even influenced by the ideas or the activities of *Martin Jacques*?

○

Talk of sinister subversives, the editor of *Marxism Today*, and indeed hilarity, brings me to the latest publication of Common Cause, one of those big business-funded weaselers-out of anti-capitalist wickedness that Labour Research is so good at exposing. The reason why hilarity still figures is not that there's anything wildly funny about *The Far Left Guide: Directory of Organisations and Supporters*, but because among the 650 'determined and resourceful' advocates of 'uncompromising socialism' listed — from Jordan and Jacques to Hain and Hallas, from Foot, Michael to Foot, Paul — nestles no less a name than mine. As you can imagine, my first response to this startling intelligence was to announce to the household that henceforth I expected my opinions on the issues of the day to be treated with considerably more respect than had been usual in the past, and indeed that I now planned to address myself to both domestic and international affairs with a solemnity — and at a length — appropriate to my new-found status as a subversive of national standing. Sadly, I have to report that the main response to my translation was a series of impish questions about whether I felt resourceful and determined enough this evening to help finish off the canvass cards.

○

The reason that I am included in Common Cause's radical travelogue is not because of the overwhelming power of my revolutionary art (well, not *entirely*), but because I am on the Council of the Institute of Race Relations. The IRR's work is usually unsung, though its influence is considerable. In the wake of last autumn's events in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham, however, it was subjected to the most extraordinary hammering by the popular prints, on the grounds that its witty and accessible literature (particularly the cartoon book *How Racism Came to Britain*) had been largely if not solely responsible for the happenings at Broadwater Farm and on the Lozells Road — a view with which the Baroness Cox became peculiarly associated. Hardly was the *Telegraph*'s ink dry, however, before the Institute's journal *Race and Class* had produced its own analysis of the demonisation of anti-racism (and indeed cultural pluralism) in the wake of the disturbances, with all the clarity, detail, intelligence and resilience with which the Institute has been traditionally associated. My contribution to its workings is largely a matter

of trumpeting its achievements, and it's good of Cause and Cox to give me the chance to do so again.

○

A quotation from the IRR's director, A. Sivanandan, is on the cover of the West Midlands County Council-commissioned report on Handsworth, *A Different Reality*. In addition, two of the report's authors (Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy) are on Common Cause's little list. The report itself is detailed, impassioned and often eloquent: its primary and unambiguous purpose is to articulate the deeply-held resentments and angers of the Black community in inner Birmingham. I don't know to what anodyne joint board the proposal for such a project would be referred in the future: the likelihood of anything like it receiving finance and support obviously disappeared with the Mets last Tuesday. The work of the GLC in allowing the powerless and the unheard their own voice has been much addressed: the similar role of the other abolished authorities should not be forgotten.

○

Among the folks now living in our house (and thus participating in the tasteless satire referred to above) is a close friend of ours who was knocked down on a zebra crossing by a Porsche last October, is still in a wheelchair, and was recently required to up her attendances for out-patient physiotherapy at the hospital from once a fortnight to three times a week. She had got used to the fact that on her fortnightly trips the ambulance service could not guarantee when she would be picked up (within a spectrum of several hours), and that there might indeed be something of a delay at the end of her treatment before she could return. Nothing prepared her, however, for the second of her triweekly consultations, which involved an almost five-hour wait for the return ambulance (till 9pm), nor her third, which was followed by a six-hour delay. Following a complaining letter of Hoffnungian understatement, she has received a grovelling apology, and the assurance that she can expect chauffeur-like service in the future. As well she might, and as well they should. Safe with us, forsooth!

ROGER WODDIS

The lady sings Joe Hill

'I cannot see a world without nuclear weapons. So do not go too hard for that pie in the sky . . .'
— Mrs Thatcher

Long-haired lefties come out in the night,
And they tell us what's wrong and what's right.
Peace may come by the purest of flukes,
But I can't see a world without nukes.

You will live
Bye and bye
In that glorious land above the sky.
Go away,
War's OK,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

You can shout but you haven't a hope,
If you doubt what I say you're a dope.
And you'd all think the same way as me
If you sat on the President's knee.

You will live
Bye and bye
In that glorious land above the sky.
Till that day
Work and pray
For that pie in the sky — SDI!

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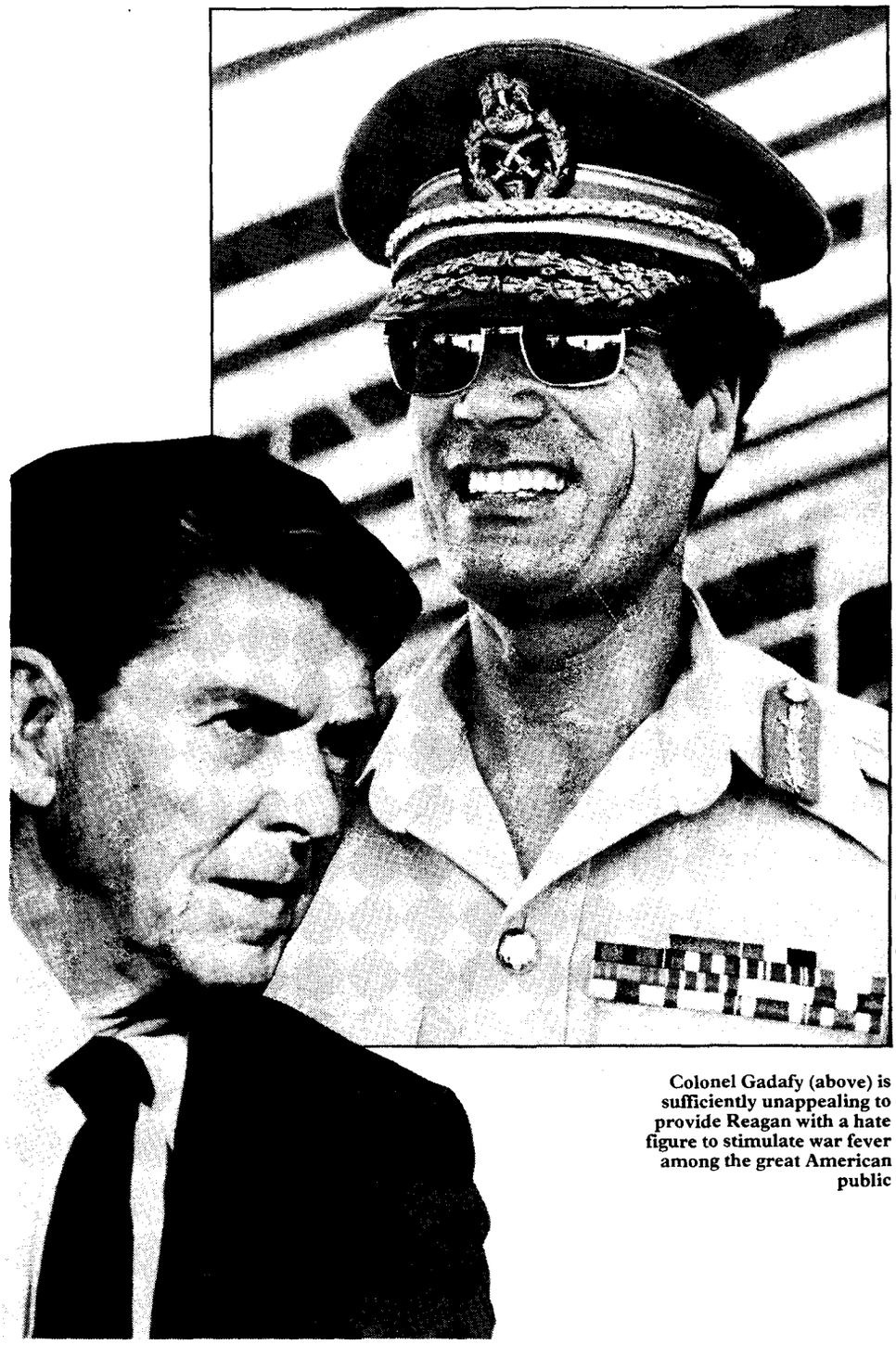

Both photos: Camera Press

Colonel Gadafy (above) is sufficiently unappealing to provide Reagan with a hate figure to stimulate war fever among the great American public

FOR THUGS AND LOONYTUNES LOOK TO WASHINGTON

Reagan detests Nicaragua because it provides a good example others may follow. Libya, on the other hand, he loves to hate; Gadafy provides the bogey he needs, writes NOAM CHOMSKY

Cambridge, Mass.

WHEN THE REAGAN Administration came to office in 1981, the journal *Foreign Affairs* appeared with a lead article by Robert Tucker. It gives a revealing insight into the thinking that lies behind the events that have unfolded since.

Tucker distinguished between 'Needs' and 'Wants'. When the US has Needs, it must be prepared to resort to violence to satisfy them. As Jeane Kirkpatrick, Reagan's former UN Ambassador, explained in *Commentary* at the same time, 'Forceful intervention' in the affairs of another nation is neither 'impractical' nor 'immoral'. (It is merely a crime, for which people were hanged at Nuremberg and Tokyo.)

Tucker's example of Needs was the Middle East, where indigenous elements might blot *our* 'right of access' to *their* resources, endangering our 'economic well-being and the integrity of [our] basic institutions.' We must then use force, he argued, in defence against such aggression. There is, of course, no reciprocal right of access for others to US resources, say, food. Historical antecedents for such a doctrine can be found; for example in the Nazi archives.

Tucker's second example was Central America, where the US has no Needs, though it does have Wants. There we are entitled to resort to violence, for 'reasons of pride, historic tradition'. Historical antecedents here do not readily come to mind.

This *Foreign Affairs* article proved an appropriate inaugural message for the Reagan Administration, which rates high in US history in its lawlessness and thuggery and would no doubt rate higher if it could escape all popular constraints. Even with them, its achievements in sponsoring and extolling slaughter, torture and general terror in the Middle East, Central America and elsewhere are impressive.

During the past few weeks the Administration has sought to whip the country into a frenzy of support for its war against Nicaragua. Public opinion, though, is still lagging, incumbered by the dreaded 'Vietnam syndrome', and thus still opposing aid to the US-organised terrorist army in Nicaragua.

The near fanatical lying on the the part of the Administration is one notable feature of the current hysteria. Governments lie; that is their business. But most preserve some shred of integrity. This one has none. It is prepared 'to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat' — in the words its titular leader used, on entering the White House, to refer to his Stalinist models.

Reagan's March speech on Nicaragua (and the subsequent PR campaign) was a noteworthy example. Some of the lies were later exposed, but they had the intended effect of shifting the spectrum of the debate. The political opposition and the media now adopt essentially the position that the Administration initially desired: military aid to what even its supporters concede is a 'proxy force' with no political base; renewal of CIA control of operations to permit uninhibited Washington funding and other means of

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escalating the guerrilla war; a commitment to 'contain' if not overthrow the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

Last week's fabricated 'invasion' of Honduras, which was Nicaragua exercising its right of 'hot pursuit' when driving out US proxy forces sent to sow terror in Nicaragua prior to the key Congressional vote, allowed the Administration to provide $20 million of military aid to Honduras — even though Honduras officially maintains that it did not request such aid and even though the equipment involved will no doubt be 'lost' in the Contra camps when the concocted crisis fades.

(At the same time, when Israel bombed refugee camps in Lebanon, killing many civilians in 'retaliation' for a rocket attack of unknown origin; or, three days earlier, shelled the market place in Nabatiye, killing three civilians, apparently in response to an attack in its 'security zone' southern Lebanon, these exercises of international terrorism aroused little interest. As a client state, Israel inherits, it seems, the right of lawless violence.)

IN EARLY MARCH, a high-ranking Western observer in Managua, with impeccable conservative credentials, described the United States as a 'deviant democracy' following a 'crypto-fascist foreign policy'. I am old enough to remember Hitler's ravings about 'containing Poland' and excising the Jewish 'cancer' that was threatening to destroy Germany. When we read today (*New York Times*) that the US must 'contain' the tiny and impoverished country that it is attacking and that it must excise 'the cancer' before it spreads, we are hearing the voice of crypto-fascism — as when the government defends its right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat, to attain its ends.

The inexpressible truth about Nicaragua and Libya is not obscure. The truth about the US war has been exposed in meticulous reports of Contra atrocities that are barely noted, then forgotten.

A second truth is that the US has been striving with fanatic intensity to drive Nicaragua into the hands of the Russians, so that TV newscasters can tell the public breathlessly about the 'Soviet bloc weapons' used by these 'Communists' — even though the US has subjected 'these Communists' to terrorist attacks by proxy army and its other CIA 'assets' while blocking every alternative source of supply, not only of arms, but of anything else.

Before the May 1985 economic embargo, Nicaraguan trade with the Soviet bloc was about 20 per cent of its total, comparable to that with the US. Now, hardly surprisingly, it is higher. The US goal is to create the totalitarian Soviet client of elite fantasy so as to provide retrospective justification for the attack launched against Nicaragua for entirely different reasons.

The real reasons why the 'cancer must be excised' are explained in an Oxfam America Report, observing that 'among the poor countries in (Central America) where Oxfam America works, only in Nicaragua has substantial effort been made to address inequity in land ownership and to extend health, educational and agricultural services to poor peasant families'. The US war has reversed this 'threatening' development and compelled Oxfam to shift its projects to war relief, a grand success for US policies. In London, the Oxfam parent organisation reports that 'from Oxfam's experience of working in 76 developing countries, Nicaragua was to prove exceptional in the strength of [its government's commitments] to improving the condition of people and encouraging their acts of participation in development process.' International lending institutions have issued similar judgements — and the point is even privately conceded by US officials. Julia Preston reports (*Boston Globe*, 9 February) that 'Administration officials said they are content to see the Contras debilitate the Sandinistas by forcing them to divert scarce resources to the war and away from social programs' — always the real concern.

The reasons advanced for the attack against Nicaragua barely merit ridicule. The ones concealed are more serious — and accepted across the elite political spectrum — so that this cruel and savage policy will persist. Meanwhile, US elites are exuberant over the success in El Salvador of what has been

'When the US has Needs it must be prepared to resort to violence to satisfy them'

described as 'a war of extermination and genocide against a defenceless civilian population', where the threat of democracy was stilled with the destruction of popular organisations.

The elites are also most gratified with 'democracy' in Honduras, where the population starves under thinly disguised military rule; or Guatemala, where near genocide conducted by a series of Himmlers lauded for their achievements by Reagan, Kirkpatrick, Eliott Abrams and other partisans of State terror has eliminated any threat to the rule by business, landowners and the military — called 'democracy' in US parlance.

THE CASE OF LIBYA is different. The Reagan Administration came into office with three essential programmes: to transfer resources from the poor to the rich; to subsidise high technology industry through the military system; and to extend forceful intervention in the Third World.

These goals require a mobilised population, hence the constant threat of war. Confrontations with the Evil Empire itself are too dangerous, so it is necessary to find a cheap target. Libya is made to order. Colonel Gadafy is easy enough to hate — and armed conflict with Libya incurs no risk so that it can be stimulated regularly to allow war fever.

The pattern was set with 'the trap laid for Libya' in 1981, as part of the effort to 'exploit the Libyan menace' to gain support for the US Rapid Deployment Force and other military measures in the region (noted Edward Haley, in a properly conservative study). Two Libyan planes were shot down after firing at US jets. A few months later, a Libyan threat to invade the Sudan across 600 miles of desert was concocted.

Meanwhile, lurid tales of Libyan hit-men roaming the streets of Washington to assassinate Our Leader were solemnly reported by the press, which then loyally refused to print the facts exposed in the *NS* (16 August 1985): that the 'assassins' on the official US list were prominent members of the (passionately anti-Libyan) Lebanese Amal, including Nabih Berri and the religious leaders of the Shi'ite community.

In February 1983, when the Administration's reactionary constituency was charging in with insufficient militancy, another Libyan threat to the Sudan was conveniently discovered, this one so subtle that Sudanese and Egyptian intelligence knew nothing about it. Secretary of State George Shultz was accordingly permitted to strike manly poses while announcing that Gadafy 'is back in his box' after a show of US resolve. With the Contra vote approaching, the US again sent naval forces into the Gulf of Sirte, eliciting an attack against US planes and an opportunity to sink Libyan naval vessels in another display of terrorism.

Concealed in these exercises are some further simple truths. First, there are means for law-abiding states to resolve disputes such as the status of the Gulf of Sirte. Since there is plainly no urgency, these means are available, but there is no thought of using them. Second, Libya attacked US planes, not US ships, and the Libyan position is consistent with that of the United States, which identifies 200 miles of airspace as a zone in which the US has the right to fire upon intruding aircraft. This fact is noted by the Conservative legal scholar, Alfred Rubin, who adds that 'by sending in aircraft we went beyond what we were clearly authorised to do under the Law of the Sea' in 'an unnecessary provocation'. But, for a gangster state, these facts are irrelevant; and the exercise was once again a success, domestically at least.

IT IS DOUBTFUL that the US can convert its proxy army into a real military threat to Nicaragua, so other means will be necessary to destroy the threat of Nicaragua's good example. The US may move towards a blockade, hoping for a confrontation with Cuba and the USSR, an international crisis in which it is likely to prevail — unless the world goes up in smoke.

With no possibility of discussing the real issues in the mainstream, the only barrier to further escalation is an aroused public opinion, which will have to learn several truths independent of the propaganda system and to be willing to act, as it did far too late, during the US attack first against South Vietnam and then against all of Indochina. There is little hope for an honest and courageous response from Europe, cowed by the Global Enforcer, just as the US can, with impunity, reject current Soviet initiatives to terminate the threat of a first strike and reverse the arms race by a comprehensive test ban. It is difficult to view the days ahead with much optimism. □

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TAKE NOT THAT HYPOCRITIC OATH

RACHEL ADAMS on Poland's conscientous objectors — an issue where peace and human rights are fused

IN THE AUTUM of last year some 25 young Polish men took the unprecedented step of returning their military call-up papers to the authorities in Poland. Each accompanied the papers with a letter stating: 'I am taking this action not because I am opposed to military service, of which the aim is the defence of the Motherland, but from a decision not to participate in lies and hypocrisy ... The military oath, like any other, makes sense only when it is a free act of conscience and so it should remain'.

The action was taken in solidarity with Marek Adamkiewicz, a young Polish soldier who had in October 1984 been sentenced to $2\frac{1}{2}$ years imprisonment for his refusal to take the oath. The wording of the oath was modified in 1976 to include a pledge of allegiance to Poland's 'fraternal allies'. The letter went on to demand release of Adamkiewicz and a change in the oath, which should be made voluntary.

In Poland two years military service is compulsory for all men and some categories of women. All former soldiers remain partly under military jurisdiction until retirement and must carry military as well as civilian ID cards. There is no conscientious objector status in Poland and refusal of the 'common duty in the defence of Polish People's Republic' may result in six years imprisonment. It is unknown how many conscientious objectors there are in Polish jails — probably over 100 — many of these being Jehovah's witnesses.

However the Adamkiewicz case was the first time the authorities had equated refusal to take the oath with conscientious objection. Such refusals in the past having usually been quietly ignored. In this case, in spite of the fact that Adamkiewicz's superior officers praised him as a good soldier, they apparently wished to make an example of a well known political activist, in the hope of deterring others.

The reverse happened. The case lit the fuse which has flared into Poland's first organised unofficial peace movement. 'The Movement for Freedom and Peace' began, after the failure of letters and petitions, with a week's hunger strike at Podkowna Lesna church in solidarity with Adamkiewicz. About 20 young people from Warsaw, Poznan and Szezecin took part. The decision to form a permanent movement arose out of seminars held in the church.

AT THE SAME time another group of 19 young people in Krakow were openly circulating an appeal, 'inspired by the peace sermons of Pope John Paul II'. The Warsaw group signed this appeal. Groups were established in Wroclaw, Gdansk and Szezecin and by January 1986 they had produced a clearly worked out programme with three 'foundations'. First, to struggle for 'civil rights, religious freedom and national independence'. Second, to make Poles aware 'of the threat of nuclear war, militarism and militaristic education' because 'many Poles fail to see this danger treating it as a bogey of communist propaganda'. And thirdly, arguing for non-violence as a way of life and a tool for struggle.

> It has succeeded in touching a raw nerve, challenging the role the Polish Army has played against striking workers

The group sees itself as building on the work done by the Committee for Social Resistance, KOS, in the last few years in instigating discussion of peace in Poland. They want to continue the dialogue begun with Western peace movements and unlike previous groups they are determined to work quite openly, using their own names.

'It's impossible to create a peace movement clandestinely in Poland', Jacek Czapntowicz told me. Czapntowicz is a 29-year-old economist and like many of the group, a former member of NZS, the student solidarity movement. He was interned for one year after martial law. He has always emphasized the group's committment to concrete, limited, achievable goals. 'What we are concerned with is the human individual. The movement has grown around one person. Our main aim is to help particular people — not to parade slogans like "peace", "disarmament", etc.'

Hence the co-ordinated action of draft resistance. The response of the authorities was prompt. Previous to this the only action they had taken was to inform Krakow members that their group was illegal and warn them they would be fined. On 29 October a letter was sent to all participants stating that 'the deliberate disposal of the military document' violated article 224 of the Defence Bill and if they did not reclaim their cards by 15 November they could be fined 50,000 Zloties (about 10,000 Zl. is a month's wage) or imprisoned for 50 days. As of 15 January none of those arrested on this charge, having refused to pay their fines, had been imprisoned.

However in Gdansk, Krzystof Glinski, a school student, was arrested for carrying documents from the movement on 9 October; while on 10 October two Krakow members of the group, Radoslaw Huget and Jan Maria Rotka were expelled from the Jagellonian University. Then on 23 December Wojciech Jankowski, a Gdansk school teacher was sentenced to $3\frac{1}{2}$ years imprisonment by a naval court in Gdynia. Jankowski had sent his cards in prior to doing his military service and had then refused service altogether. The judge declared that the sentence reflected 'the socially damaging nature of the offence', and 'the fact that similar offences occur with increasing frequency in the area of the court's jurisdiction'.

Finally, on 19 February this year Jacek Czapntowicz and another leading member of the Warsaw group, Piotr Niemczyk, were both arrested on charges of 'spreading false information', 'sowing unrest' and 'giving information to interests hostile to Poland', charges which carried a potential five year prison sentence. These charges were quickly reduced to the single one of 'participating in an illegal organisation' perhaps because of the number of protests from the West, though this charge still carries a three year sentence.

IT WOULD SEEM that the group has succeeded in touching a raw nerve. A challenge to the military oath is a challenge to Soviet hegemony and the role the Polish Army has played both in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and against striking Polish workers, in 1970 and 1981, as the group indicates in a letter to the West. Compulsory military service is one form of political and ideological control which the government used with effect in the Spring of 1983 when it drafted large numbers of Solidarity activists into the army.

Other sections of Polish society also realise this. A petition demanding the immediate liberation of conscientious objectors and those refusing to take the oath; the introduction of a voluntary oath with obligations limited to Poland, and the introduction of an alternative to military service got over 100 signatures in the first day including Lech Walesa, Anne Walentynowicz and Jacek Kuron (whose son is a member of the group).

The most recent arrests have yet again failed to subdue the movement. On 16 March six women began a week's hunger strike in protest at the church in Podkowna Lesna where the group began. □

Amnesty has adopted Piotr Niemczyk and Jacek Czapntowicz as prisoners of conscience. For more information contact Clare Hanson, tel 01-833 1771.

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LETTERS

BL should bid for Ford

Geoffrey Goodman, London EC4

Neil Kinnock's analysis of British Leyland (*NS* 28 March) was one of the most comprehensively devastating cases put forward so far in support of a 'British solution' to BL's problems.

All the evidence now emerging shows that the attractive aspects of the General Motors' offer (such as linking BL with GM's worldwide distribution network) were mere sugar-coating to conceal the fact that BL would have ended up as an emasculated rump of GM. It would have led to the closure of various BL truck and commercial vehicle plants as well as the probable shut-down of GM's Bedford truck plant.

A Ford take-over of BL's Austin-Rover car manufacturing would have had a similar impact on the car sections of both companies.

The reason why the Prime Minister along with Norman Tebbit tried to drive through with the GM (and originally the Ford) deal was largely because they had failed to find another alternative to speedy privatisation of BL. National industrial interests came a bad second to the primary motive of privatisation at any cost.

The curious feature in all this is how to reconcile Mrs Thatcher's proclaimed 'British stance' with her obsession to flog the family silver and her now quite remarkable failure to preside over any national economic regeneration.

A much more imaginative (even Thatcherite) approach would have been for the Prime Minister to approach the British car industry as if it were a new kind of Falklands issue and offer (or even threaten) to make a bid for Ford of Europe. Why not? BL management, design, technology, productivity, etc have all improved at a faster rate than most of our international competitors, with the possible exception of Japan. Moreover BL now has a highly effective partnership with Honda which promises even more advantages in the future if properly utilised. Given the fact that Ford top management in Detroit has been through the hoop recently and their international performance has not been all that marvellous (see the account by a former Ford executive in *Iacocca: My Story*) a BL bid for Ford of Europe (backed by a flag-waving Margaret Thatcher) might have won the admiration, even the support, of the most improbable quarters . . . even Rupert Murdoch.

And think what this could have done for Britain's self-esteem: it might have convinced even the shop floor that British industry really did have a future worth working for.

Loitering with intent

John Esmond, Oxford

Mrs Thatcher has been quick to defend Mr Reagan's Navy's right to sail unmolested in disputed international waters off Libya. There are several hundred families whose loved ones died aboard the *General Belgrano* who might think Mrs Thatcher's stance somewhat hypocritical.

If she can draw a 200-mile 'exclusion zone' around the Falkland/Malvinas area where she does not live, and then order the sinking of a lumbering old cruiser sailing away 50 miles outside the zone, what right has she to censure 'Colonel' (phonetically and fanatically something of a nut) Gadafy for taking a pot shot at people invading the exclusion zone around the place where he *does* live?

The Americans have no more right to 'exercise' just off the coast of a country that doesn't want them there than the Russians have a right to site missiles in Cuba (or the Americans to site them in England). If there were international police in the same way that there are English police, then the Americans would have been arrested months ago for loitering with intent, soliciting, threatening behaviour and/or behaving in a manner likely to cause a breach of the peace.

One does not need to sympathise with fanatics in order to chastise louts; military Yanks go home, the world is too small for international gang warfare.

Not such a sensual experience

Charles Fyffe, London NW6

To the millions who attend a daily job in London the Paolozzi mosaics at Tottenham Court Road station (*NS* 21 March) are decidedly *not* 'the most imaginative public patronage of the arts since the war.' A few art critics may have the time to stand and admire 'a sensuous and Byzantine experience in abstract iridescent patterns of glass' but for the travelling public the escalators, passages and platforms of the Underground are, to quote Ruskin, 'drains for the discharge of a tormented mob, in which the only object in reaching any spot is to be transferred to another.'

We cannot help, as we wait on a filthy platform for an erratic transport service, agreeing that (Ruskin again) 'There never was more flagrant nor impertinent folly than the smallest portion of ornament in anything concerned with railroads.' If there is money available let it be spent on giving us what we once had, many years ago: the finest urban transport system in the world.

Spirit of El Salvador

Bron Soan, Hereford

Having just returned from El Salvador I can fully endorse Martha Gellhorn's description of the situation there (*NS* 21 March). I disagree on one point — living and working (I am a nurse and spent my month's vacation there) with a group of community based nuns I was daily impressed by the cheerfulness of the people despite the fact that almost everyone had experienced family tragedy through death squad activity, disappearance, torture or imprisonment.

Typical of the situation was that I never met anyone who was a native of the place they now live in, all had been refugees. I visited Tenancingo, a beautiful little cobbled town reminiscent of gold rush ghost towns with its empty streets and quiet houses — except that here house walls were patterned with machine gun bullets and cratered by bombs, a reminder of the 300 people who were killed when the army moved in. Now, under the protection of the church, 15 families had moved in.

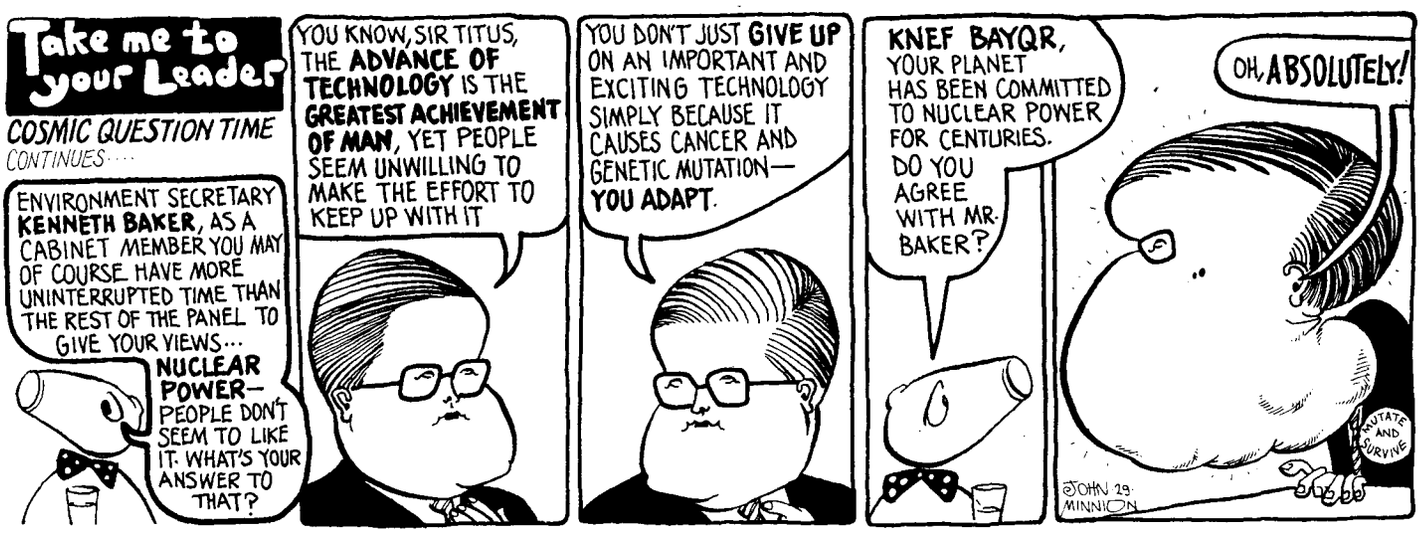
Unlike Martha Gellhorn I did spend an afternoon in the (male) prison — Mariona — with the political prisoners, each of whom had undergone the standard two weeks torture before arriving there and were now serving a 6- or 12-year sentence — they didn't know which as, of course, there are neither charges nor trials. At least they had survived but even here safety wasn't guaranteed: they have been bombed once and twice the death squads had visited.

Joining the judges

Councillor Hazel Smith, Lambeth, London SW2

Your knowledge of Lambeth's housing benefit situation (*NS* 21 March) is pathetic, as exemplified by the fact that the only verifiable statement in your report you got wrong. I can assure you the name of the Chair of Housing is not Helen Smith.

Or is it a case of why let the Tory judges have all the fun?


Take me to your Leader
COSMIC QUESTION TIME CONTINUES....
ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY KENNETH BAKER, AS A CABINET MEMBER YOU MAY OF COURSE HAVE MORE UNINTERRUPTED TIME THAN THE REST OF THE PANEL TO GIVE YOUR VIEWS...
NUCLEAR POWER— PEOPLE DON'T SEEM TO LIKE IT. WHAT'S YOUR ANSWER TO THAT?
YOU KNOW, SIR TITUS, THE ADVANCE OF TECHNOLOGY IS THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF MAN, YET PEOPLE SEEM UNWILLING TO MAKE THE EFFORT TO KEEP UP WITH IT
YOU DON'T JUST GIVE UP ON AN IMPORTANT AND EXCITING TECHNOLOGY SIMPLY BECAUSE IT CAUSES CANCER AND GENETIC MUTATION— YOU ADAPT.
KNEF BAYQR, YOUR PLANET HAS BEEN COMMITTED TO NUCLEAR POWER FOR CENTURIES. DO YOU AGREE WITH MR. BAKER?
OH, ABSOLUTELY!
MUTATE AND SURVIVE
JOHN 29 MINNION

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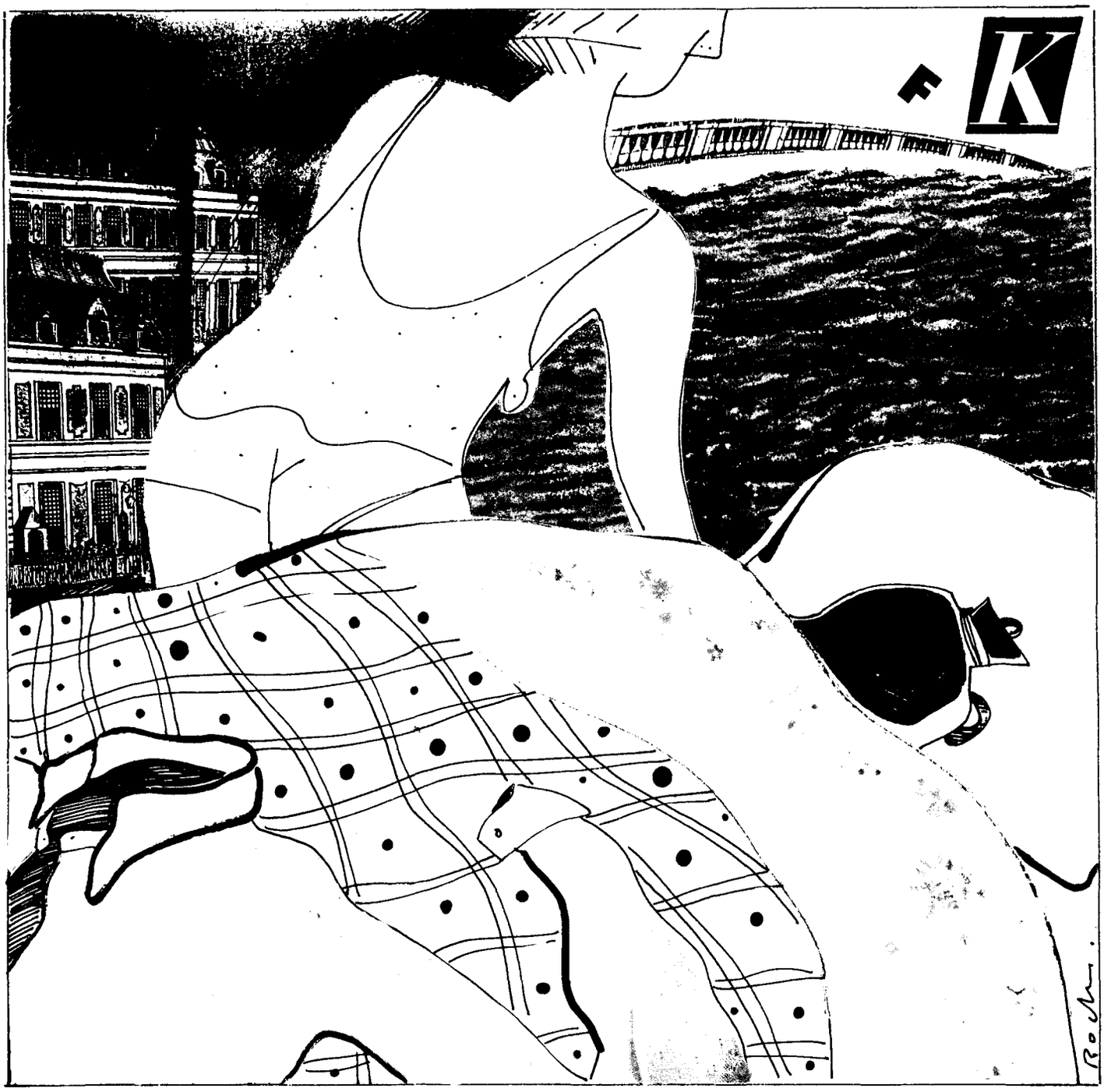

Christine Roche

Franz Kafka's shirt

Short story by Kate Pullinger

GENEVIEVE paid a great deal of attention to her dreams because she believed they revealed important things about her state of mind. Her dream-life was particularly rich; Genevieve could often remember her dreams with a clarity that she found much more rarely in her actual waking life. Her dreams were like little absurdist plays, one after the other, night after night. It was as if Ionesco had moved into her unconscience.

From time to time Genevieve's dreams were more straightforward, tiny snippets of wish-fulfilment that lasted five seconds, like the night she dreamt she was given a pen, the ink of which would never blot, and the time she dreamt she went back to school and humiliated the boy who once told her she was ugly. But, more often, her dreams made

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little obvious sense and Genevieve had to spend whole mornings figuring out what they meant. She had her own set of dream-analysis tools and her own ideas about the symbolism within her. Not for her the Freudian, Jungian, Reichian interpretations, nor even the more hippy ideas of dreaming and astrology.

Genevieve's dreams were like theatre, so she interpreted them like theatre. She enjoyed them and queued for ice cream in the interval. She appreciated the art behind their creation and she admired the design of the sets. Most of all, she was thrilled with the way she almost always knew all the people in the dream. It was like having a fringe theatre company devoted to the interpretation of one's own life. That was how Genevieve saw her dreams: very interesting, often disturbing, but something that didn't actually have much impact upon the everyday occurrences of her diurnal life.

In this waking life, Genevieve was a normalish type of person. She had a job she didn't like, although it didn't annoy her enough for her to look for another one. She had a pleasant social life and spent many happy evenings arguing with her friends in front of the fire. She went to the cinema, the theatre, the odd party, she wore lipstick in the evening and she smoked too much. She fell in love and had her heart broken. And she had vivid dreams every night. Genevieve didn't feel there was anything particularly lacking from her own life, although many of her friends, with lives just like hers, did.

Occasionally Genevieve and her friends talked about their dreams. When Genevieve told the others about hers, everybody laughed and said they wished they had such entertaining, strange, nonsensical dreams. No one thought there could possibly be anything wrong with the way Genevieve was dreaming.

One night Genevieve dreamt she was wearing Franz Kafka's shirt. In this very brief dream all that happened was Genevieve found herself standing on the pavement in front of where she lived. She looked down at what she was wearing and, when she saw the shirt she had on, she knew that it was Franz Kafka's shirt. That was it. That was all that happened in the dream.

But, the weekend after having that dream, and after Genevieve and her friends had had a good giggle at the absurdity of it, Genevieve went to a jumble sale. As she was looking through a pile of shirts on a table in the church hall, she found herself holding a shirt that she felt, against all probability, was Franz Kafka's shirt. It was an ordinary man's shirt of a variety often to be found at jumble sales, cotton mix, rather soiled around the collar and worn thin on the left elbow. The only remarkable thing about this shirt, other than the fact that Genevieve was sure it was Franz Kafka's shirt, was that it was printed with a motif of beige cowboys on beige bucking broncos. It was a discreet motif, the sort of print one would not notice unless one really looked at that kind of thing, like someone with a theory about understanding men by examining the patterns on their shirts. Genevieve was not that kind of a person.

'Genevieve's dreams were like theatre, so she interpreted them like theatre. She enjoyed them and queued for ice cream in the interval.'

Quickly, and not without exhibiting embarrassment, Genevieve bought the shirt from the elderly woman behind the table, insisting on paying twenty pence instead of the ten pence which the woman had asked for. She took the shirt home with her and soaked it in the bathtub for the afternoon, hoping to remove the stain around the neck; also, even if she didn't think of it, hoping to remove whatever it was about the shirt that made her think it was Franz Kafka's. While it soaked Genevieve sat in the kitchen. She told herself that Franz Kafka had been dead for rather a long time and as far as she knew he had never lived in her country, let alone her neighbourhood, and the chances that a shirt that had been anywhere near Franz Kafka would turn up at a jumble sale in South London were very slim. As well as all that, she felt quite certain, having read several of his books, that Franz Kafka would not have worn a shirt with a motif of cowboys on bucking broncos adorning it, no matter how discreet.

Still, once she had taken the shirt out of the tub, washed it, wrung it dry and hung it up, then looked at it hanging there, rather limp and not even terribly stylish, she knew that it was Franz Kafka's shirt and there was nothing she could do about it.

So, she wore it. She wore it to parties, she wore it to work, she wore it to the cinema. No one ever noticed the shirt, except for a few people who laughed at the cowboys, and although Genevieve lived with the hope that one day someone would say, 'Hey! Isn't that Franz Kafka's shirt?', no one ever did. Gradually Genevieve became accustomed to wearing Franz Kafka's shirt and the urge to find someone to talk to about it, an urge that came over her with particular strength when she was drunk, faded. All she was left with was a rather uninteresting looking piece of clothing and a faint sense that something, somewhere, was odd.

Genevieve's life went on as it always had done and her dream-life continued as well. More miniature absurdist dramas took place in her mind than at any real theatre. These dreams continued to amuse Genevieve, and her friends.

Then, one night during the wet and bleak London winter, months after she had dreamt about Franz Kafka's shirt, Genevieve dreamt about swimming. She was swimming with Franz Kafka in a murky, muddy river. Franz Kafka was wearing a swimming costume, modern and brief in style, printed with the same pattern as his shirt, cowboys and bucking broncos. They were swimming the Australian crawl side by side when Franz Kafka suddenly stopped and shouted at Genevieve, 'What makes you think you can wear a dead writer's clothes?' Genevieve also stopped swimming and turned her body in the water so she could face him. 'That was my favourite shirt,' he added indignantly.

'Oh, was it?' said Genevieve. 'Don't you think you've been dead for rather too long to be complaining about this sort of thing?'

'Humph,' said Franz Kafka, cheekily, 'I suppose it will be my shoes next. Or perhaps Dostoevsky's underwear, eh?'

'Shut up,' Genevieve shouted, 'you're dead!' And, with that, she lunged at Franz Kafka, travelling through the water like a torpedo, and grabbed him around the neck. With one hand she attempted to throttle him whilst with the other she tried to twist off his head. The expression on Franz Kafka's face was terrible.

Genevieve woke up when she felt hot liquid on her hands. At first she thought it was Franz Kafka's blood, streaming from his neck, but she realised quickly that she had unscrewed her hot-water bottle whilst dreaming. She screwed the top back in and then sat up, dismayed to find a colossal wet patch in the centre of the bed like the unpleasant leftover of a wild sexual tryst.

Genevieve did not sleep for the remainder of the night and she was not to sleep for the many nights that followed. Early in the morning she would rise, put on Franz Kafka's shirt and go for long walks along the Thames. From Vauxhall Bridge she would stare down into the murky, muddy water of the river. She half expected to one day see the body of Franz Kafka floating there, identifiable by his swimming costume, the faint pattern of beige cowboys on beige bucking broncos. □

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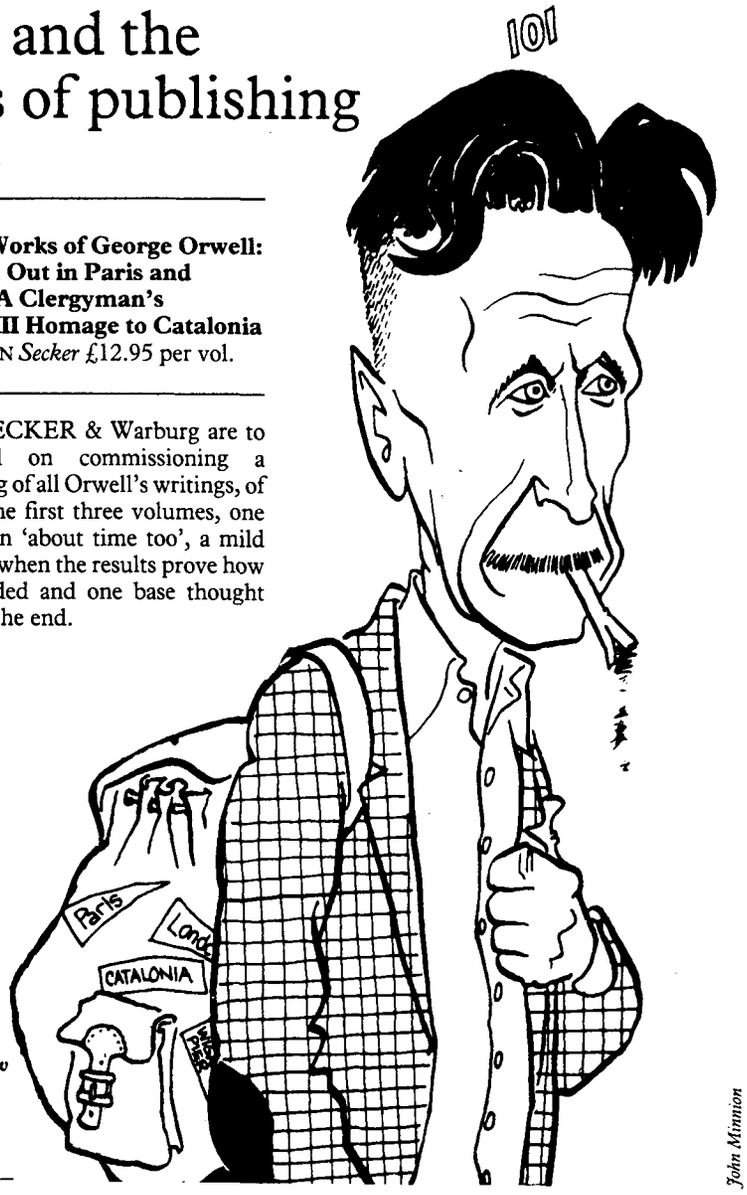
Orwell and the politics of publishing

Bernard Crick

The Complete Works of George Orwell: Vol. I Down and Out in Paris and London; Vol. II A Clergyman's Daughter; Vol. III Homage to Catalonia
ed. PETER DAVISON *Secker* £12.95 per vol.

ALTHOUGH SECKER & Warburg are to be congratulated on commissioning a complete re-editing of all Orwell's writings, of which these are the first three volumes, one cannot suppress an 'about time too', a mild shudder of horror when the results prove how much it was needed and one base thought which I'll save to the end.



John Minnion

Cover drawing from *Unwelcome Guerrilla: George Orwell and the New Statesman — An Anthology*, introduced by Bernard Crick

What one reads on a page, though meaningful, may not be quite what its author intended. Authors, copyists and typists make errors in transliteration; so do publishers' readers, even, and printers. Punctuation, spelling and paragraphing may be corrected, improved or standardised by publisher and printer, style and syntax by copy editors. Even in a short popular article the meaning can be shifted or a dramatic surprise anticipated and spoiled by an imposed headline. The very make-up and design of a book create expectations — for instance, that it is Literature or political polemic.

It is ironical that a man who cultivated the persona of plain, straightforward truth-teller (as much literary artifice as any other style) needs a scholarly apparatus to restore his intentions. Specialists have for a long time been uneasily aware that all his books, except the last, were produced in difficult conditions. Victor Gollancz first rejected *Burmese Days* for fear of libel and *Down and Out in Paris and London* got a very heavy going over for both libel and obscenity. Orwell changed several passages in Gollancz's own office. He agreed to alter names in *Burmese Days* and gave Gollancz precise if dubious assurances about the fictionality of characters. The 'Clergyman's Daughter', Professor Davison can now demonstrate, was raped — which explains a lot; but those paragraphs had to go and are lost for ever.

It is now difficult to imagine how careful publishers had to be until very recently. Gollancz had good cause to be worried. Henry Viztelly, the English publisher of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, had gone to prison in 1889 for publishing Zola, an event, as Davison reminds us, which was closer in time to Gollancz when he was considering Orwell's first manuscripts than their publication is to us today.

So, the case for a new edition is very strong — no pedantry at all. And Peter Davison, a famous Shakespearean bibliographer (also historian of music hall), is an admirable choice. He has no prior commitments, literary or political, to the grim struggles for the possession of Orwell's body. He is skilled in his craft and sensible in the presentation he adopts. The General Introduction, printed in front of *Down and Out . . .*, explains his general principles and thereafter he is 'silent' about corrections of punctuation, spelling and most individual words. Then each volume has an introduction — of varying length but none will be long — and Textual Notes at the rear explain more significant changes and his authority for them (mostly found in Orwell's letters or notebooks and some surviving proofs). His technique is very like that of the New Penguin Shakespeare, with the apparatus fore and aft but the text left clear from editorial footnotes. Penguin should now reprint the new plain Orwell texts for the general reader and simply refer in a brief note in each volume to Davison's scholarly edition. That must be done. And it would be a public scandal if Penguin did not or could not reprint reasonably soon. Orwell, after Dickens and Wells, was perhaps the last popular, eventually best-selling writer who wrote on serious political and moral themes for the common reader: that old public whose only university was the public library and the bookshop.

The great dilemma for Penguin will lie not in Orwell's books but in his other writings. At the moment there is one excellent book of selected essays and the famous and familiar four volumes of *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters*. These were well edited but a selection and the more one read the rest of Orwell the more curious the selection seemed. Sonia Orwell prided herself on 'good literary judgement' and she found, as she once said to me, 'all that politics very boring, he'd have soon given it up' — an engagingly dotty view. Her selection is not so much politically biased (she wouldn't tolerate right-wing body-snatching — despite formidable pressure from Orwell's US publisher, Jovanovich himself) as anti-political. She never grasped the paradox that most of his best *writing* was political, that he wanted 'above all to make political writing into an art' — and did. Now this new edition plans to bring out ten volumes of 'other writings'. Then for the first time a critical appraisal could be made of the whole of Orwell's work. Part of that appraisal must be a new multi-volume selection of essays, letters and journalism. The familiar four will be dated not so much by their texts as by their selectivity. But I can see no case for a popular edition of the ten volumes; indeed the amount of repetition and trivia would damage Orwell's reputation. His lasting claim to greatness will be as an essayist and polemical journalist, so the next stage, the new selection will be vital. But one almost despairs of thinking of anyone in Britain whose political judgment matches their literary judgment — an odd reflection on our culture compared with that of America, France, Italy or West Germany.

I have only one cavil with and one objection to Professor Davison's edition. The cavil is that his *Lion and the Unicorn*, Orwell's reflections on the English character and the need for a socialist revolution, published as a separate book, is once again going to be derogated as a long essay among others — from which Penguin rescued it only three years ago (and have just reprinted). This is literary bias working against his own editorial rules of

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trying to follow Orwell's expressed intentions.

My big difference with him is that Davison follows Orwell's final expressed intention and reprints *The Homage to Catalonia* as a continuous eye-witness narrative, thus relegating to an appendix chapter 5, where he pauses to characterise the political parties involved, and chapter 11, where he reflects on what actually happened in the May riots in Barcelona between the Communists and the Anarchists and on British press reaction. But that was *neither* Orwell's first intention *nor* what he wrote. I believe the change would have been, and now is, a bad decision. The book now ends as before, with his homecoming; but there follow two appendices. Does any word strike duller chords in the common reader? They will be skipped — as any teacher can tell you, so many readers skip the Appendix on Newspeak in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, always intended by Orwell to be read as part of the text, the last sardonic, satiric thrust that quite changes the meaning of the book compared with thinking that it ends 'He loved Big Brother'.

The two political chapters in *The Homage* are crucial to the meaning of the book. To follow the expressed intentions of Orwell's last few years, as Peter Davison well knows, would have stopped any republication of *A Clergyman's Daughter* or *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and removed (which he had resisted at the time of publication) the entire second half of *The Road to Wigan Pier*. He was always depressed, after the act of creation, about the worth of his books, with the sole exception of *Animal Farm*. His sardonic and depressive comments on his works cannot furnish a clear editorial rule. When in doubt, surely the text must be what the author first wrote? I hope strongly that a popular reprint will not risk losing the political heart of the matter by following Davison mechanically in this.

But I am left, while full of admiration for all the editing except that of *The Homage*, with a bad thought in my mind. Orwell's copyright will naturally expire in 2000, fifty years after his death. The common writer is then in the public domain. These three volumes have a copyright marked to Peter Davison for 1986 to 'Introduction and Textual Notes' — fair enough — and to the Orwell estate for 1986 for 'this edition'.

Do you see what I am driving at? Is it the intention that Secker & Warburg will argue in 2000 that the revised text constitutes, because of the amount of editorial work put into it, a new copyright valid until 2036? Is the purpose of the firm wholly a scholarly dedication to the integrity of the word that still sustains them? Will we have a situation in 14 years' time in which the old corrupt text of a major English writer falls into the public domain but the good text is still in copyright? The law is obscure at the moment. From Cambridge University Press's editing of D.H. Lawrence, it seems that a combination of editorial labour and major changes *can* constitute a new legal copyright. But, thinking of the man, is this decent? And is it in the public interest? Haven't the estate, the agent (who is sole literary executor) and the publisher made enough money out of the poor socialist already? They have not spent one penny on the kind of subsidies for good causes or poor writers on which he was embarking as money began to come in too late for him to enjoy.

If I am not senile in 14 years' time may I now serve notice to any publishers who want to do cheap editions of Orwell with the good text

Veurne

Peter Stimson

Darkness and a faint sea-mist surrounds this town.
Dirk says: 'They know you're arriving late, so
let's have a beer.' Illogic is normality tonight
as we guzzle potent proofs of the local brew.

I sail through the first set in one piece
(i.e. I don't sing false or break a string)
and get paid during the interval,
then the resident yodeller borrows my guitar
and breaks a top-E.

On feigned exasperation at not having to continue
more drinks are served, and more
till the club empties and we're out
to taste the nightlife in Veurne.

The *vrouwke*
who had clapped the loudest and the longest
sits alone at a table fatefully reserved for me:
she requests a few songs by post
and that I understand her.

By now this is café one-hundred-and-umpteen.
My tongue is tied, I can't get a word in between.

She says the entire world is against her —
her family, the neighbours, the Church, her ex-boyfriend —
I have become the editor of her problem-page,
yet I need more-than-an-editor of my own.

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Leslie Chapman, *New Society*

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Hugh Stephenson, *The Guardian*

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that I'm available as an expert witness to testify ambiguously that while Davison's labours were great yet the amount of important change might seem less than the Cambridge Lawrence and that, while Davison's integrity is as great as his scholarship, yet Secker & Warburg and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich might just be acting somewhat in restraint of trade. Are they really both committed to a *complete* Orwell as they claim or are they just testing the market? Rumours abound that the Americans just want to skim the cream of new editions of the most popular works alone. □

FICTION

On their mettle

Geoff Dyer

Pride
WILLIAM WHARTON *Cape* £9.95
An Artist of the Floating World
KAZUO ISHIGURO *Faber* £8.95
The News from Ireland and other stories
WILLIAM TREVOR *Bodley Head* £9.95

PRIDE IS ONE of those rare novels that make you look forward to films ending, pubs closing and people leaving so that you can get back to reading it. It is made up of two equally compelling narratives moving slowly but irresistibly together. The first, that of a young boy, Dickie Kettleson, is a vivid and loving recreation of a family's struggle out of the years of the Depression. While *Dad* was concerned with a middle-aged son's surviving his father's final illness, here we return to rich, often idyllic memories of boyhood, of a family bound together by hardship. The other, far brisker strand follows Sture Modig, a remnant of the generation whose spirits were damaged irrevocably by the First World War. Modig was a child prodigy who was badly wounded, became for a while a successful racing driver but who is now reduced to earning a living at fairs doing a motorcycle 'Wall of Death' routine with a pet lion. Dickie has also, unwittingly, adopted a lion cub and the two stories move together at Wildwood, an off-season beach resort where the Kettlesons are lying low after the father's union activities have led to threats to his family. There Dickie sees his parents relaxed and free of worries but their safety is soon threatened by the news that Modig's lion has escaped and killed a man.

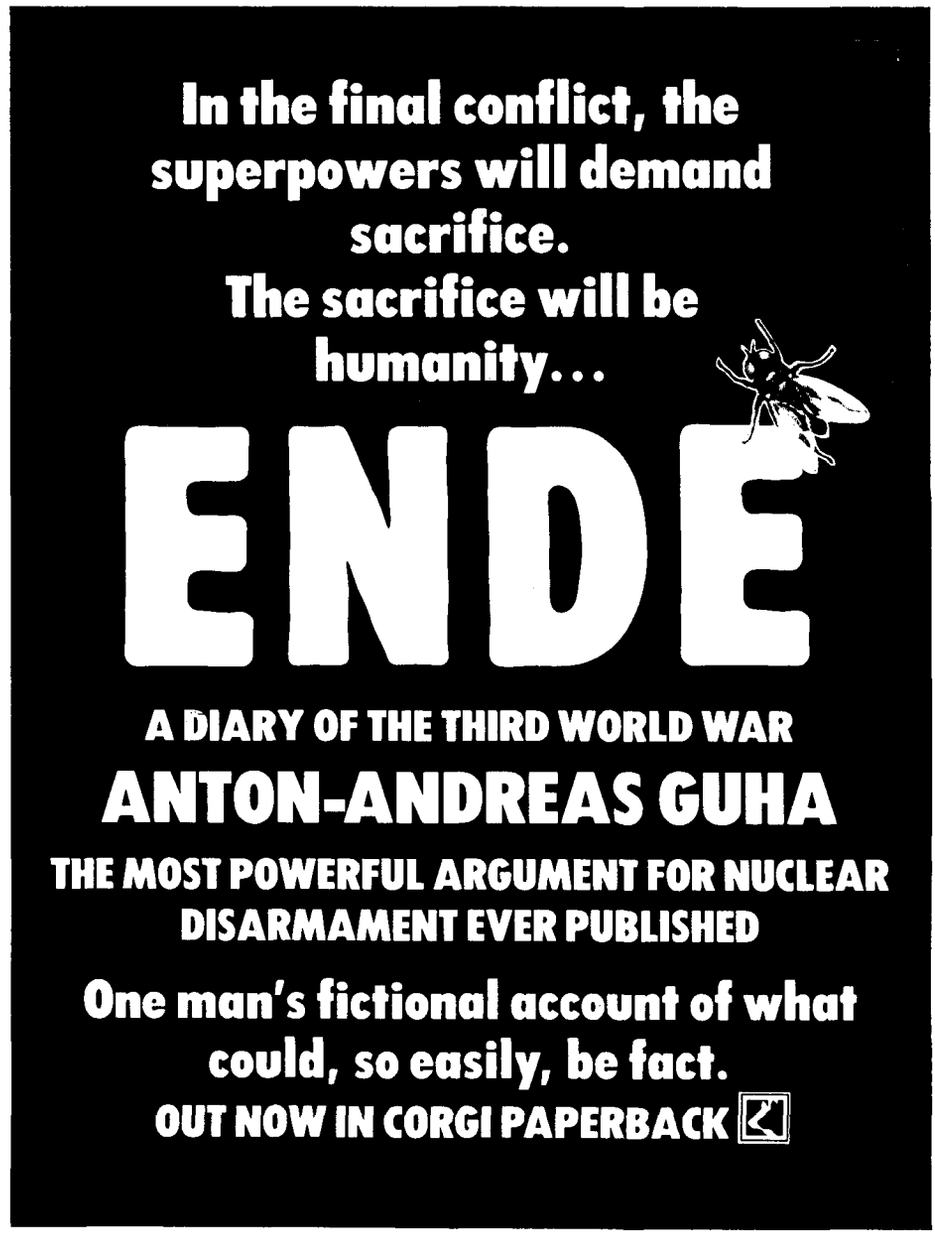
For Wharton the real-life incident on which the novel is based became 'a subconscious symbol, a foreboding, of all the violence and violation possible in life'. That threat is ever-present but the novel is warmly embracing, suffused by the strong, gentle, leonine resilience of the father. Wharton's own skill recalls Dickie's father; his story-telling is generously sympathetic, hospitable, full of good counsel and this is a novel of which he should be especially proud.

As should Kazuo Ishiguro, of his second novel, **An Artist of the Floating World**. In the Japan of the late Forties Masuji Ono, a retired painter, looks with bemused approval at a country in the process of regenerating itself as a capitalist power, succumbing to crass Americanisation and eager to atone for atrocious memories of the recent past. The complex business of arranging his daughter's marriage, however, leads Ono meandering back to his past, to his days as a young man serving his apprenticeship as an 'artist of the floating world' — the twilight district of geishas and bars. The deepening crises and Japan's expansionist ambitions of the Thirties lead Ono to reject this 'decadent' art in favour of a propagandist art addressing itself directly to the problems of the day; Ono himself meanwhile explicitly identifies himself with the extreme right, serving on the Committee on Unpatriotic Activities and reporting a pupil to the secret police.

Ishiguro arranges Ono's uncertain reminiscences with the same elliptical skill displayed in *A Pale View of Hills*, coaxing nuances out of hinted ambiguities. His writing is clean, unharried and airy; full of inflections and innuendo, it touches the reader as lightly as a gentle breeze. While Ono abandons the 'fragile lantern beauty' of the floating world for a strident, political art of thick black outlines and bold calligraphy Ishiguro impresses by how much history he can contain within — and between — his frail lines.

While I'm happy to add to the consensus of praise for Ishiguro I have some reservations about **News from Ireland**, the new collection from William Trevor. Of Trevor's skill, his understanding of human foibles and weakness — of his stature as a writer, in other words — there is no question. Each of these new stories is extremely impressive in its own right; taken as a whole though one wonders what this collection *adds* to his reputation.

Stylistically Trevor is the least showy and obtrusive of writers (though in this book his method is more oblique; he employs more tangled threads of narration and seems to be moving towards a more novelistic structure than is usual in the short story). At the same time there is something discreetly loaded about these agnostic fables. Trevor's skill conceals the imposition of an unvarying resolution upon his material. Throughout


In the final conflict, the superpowers will demand sacrifice.
The sacrifice will be humanity...
ENDE
A DIARY OF THE THIRD WORLD WAR
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One man's fictional account of what could, so easily, be fact.
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there is a tacit insistence that regret, loneliness and weakness are the mainsprings of human activity, the touchstone of our humanity. Certainly these elements are part of the human condition but — to be simple — there is more to life than this and to insist again and again and again *within the conventions of naturalism* on only one part of that condition is to distort.

Halfway through this collection one begins to wonder if his characters are behaving as they do simply because they are in a Trevor story. Concerned with 'the cobweb of human frailty' his stories are peopled almost entirely by those who find comfort in mutually disappointed expectations; his favoured characters are widows, divorcees, the lonely and impotent. Noteably absent are any characters who resist the dominant Trevor ethic (if they appear at all there is often something 'vulgar' about them); hence his predilection for lonely tourists — 'strangers among strangers'. His characters' options are defined within an imaginative world whose conclusions are foregone. In the best literary tradition Trevor's morals are enacted rather than stated but a given arrangement of events always leads to the same moral configuration.

Trevor is a master of the naturalist short story; if in this collection we witness his limitations we are also discovering the limits of a particular form. And that in itself is an achievement. □

Trials and trilobites

Steven Rose

Time Frames: The Rethinking of Darwinian Evolution and the Theory of Punctuated Equilibria
NILES ELDREDGE *Heinemann* £12.95

BEFORE DARWIN, species were believed to be immutable, unchangeably located, by god or nature, along a great chain of being. Darwin transmuted species. All biology became flux; evolution, as a consequence of inherited variation and natural selection, constantly modified species, preserving favoured varieties better adapted to the ever-changing environment.

Orthodox neo-Darwinism, which adds genetics and molecular biology to give a synthetic theory of evolution, has pursued the idea of flux and located as the subject and object of evolutionary change the single 'selfish gene'. Such genes, constantly 'striving' to replicate themselves, to incorporate copies of their DNA into a subsequent generation's biology, have become the focus of almost all-absorbing attention in the last quarter-century.

When Darwin's *Origin* was first published, critics were quick to seize on the fact that, whereas it focused on the mechanism for the *change* of species, the evidence from the fossil record was not so much of rapid change as of long periods in which nothing much changed at all — of *stasis*. Darwin's contemporaries had no good way of dating rocks and thus measuring these periods of stability, but it is now clear that fossils of some species may be indistinguishable from one another over periods of millions of years.

In 1972 Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould proposed a modified evolutionary theory they called punctuated equilibrium to account for stability. The new theory became the centre of renewed controversy. To creationists it seemed to be a stick to beat the evolutionists with. To 'selfish-genists' the emphasis on selection at the level of the species rather than the gene was heretical. To certain excitable anti-leftists it was dangerously revolutionary with its concern for sudden rather than slow change, particularly as one of its two protagonists, Gould, made explicit reference to Engels and dialectics in discussing the roots of his ideas.

Darwin had always argued for gradualism, held that 'nature does not make leaps'. Even his staunchest contemporary allies, like Thomas Huxley, opposed his rigidity on this point, and Eldredge's and Gould's theory sides with Huxley. Evolution, they insist, is as much about stability as it is about change, and change, when it occurs, is relatively rapid (which means, for a palaeontologist, the odd 50-100,000 years).

In *Time Frames*, Eldredge gives his own account of how he and Gould were led to the theory, based on Eldredge's PhD study of the distribution of one of the commonest of fossilised early life forms, trilobites, a sort of primordial crayfish. Going out, like any good graduate student, to observe evolutionary change over the three to seven million years of trilobite history preserved in the fossil records of what used to be a vast ocean but is now a major portion of the USA, Eldredge increasingly despaired as he failed to find any apparent change at all, in widely differing environments. Eventually, he observed a minute change in the number of lenses in the trilobite eye — a change which did not, however, lead to the formation of new species. Only punctuated equilibrium finally makes sense of these observations.

Eldredge steers clear of the theoretical and ideological controversies that have surrounded Gould's writing on similar themes. But he has a good research tale to tell and he tells it clearly, with all the enthusiasm which must have characterised Victorian fossil-hunters and today is more commonly found in cosmologists and molecular biologists. If Eldredge's book makes more people aware of the sheer range and complexity of problems biological theory-making has to embrace, it will have served its purpose well. □

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FILMS

Soho what?

John Coleman

Absolute Beginners (15)
Leicester Square Theatre; Odeon, Marble Arch
No Surrender (15)
Odeon, Haymarket

WASN'T IT Mike Todd, arch-persuader, producer of *Around the World in Eighty Days*, who coined the phrase 'Sell the sizzle, not the steak'? If so, he should have been living at this hour to witness his injunction carried out beyond even his wildest dreams. But he died in 1958, the year in which Colin MacInnes wrote a picaresque fiction about teenagers, an almost plot-free celebration building to the sombre matter of race riots, that has hitherto resisted attempts to translate it to the screen. Now, after acres of press coverage and what seems like hours of TV promotion, Julien Temple's **Absolute Beginners** is here before us, sizzling away as if the future of Goldcrest depended on it, and — first question — where's the bloody steak?

Colin (Eddie O'Connell) is both physical centre and occasional voice-over narrator, rising 19, a young photographer with the hots for Suzette (Patsy Kensit), a pretty girl who works for fashion designer Henley (James Fox) and — desirous of the good things in life as a song-dance number 'Having It All' indicates — marries the epicene fellow. Meanwhile, Colin roams the garish studio-Soho streets, clogged with such acquaintances as the vicious little Wizard, who becomes a baby pimp and fascist, Big Jill, a plump lesbian, the Fabulous

Recommended viewing

A regular selection by our critic from films still doing the rounds

Clockwise Zany any-road movie début by prime farceur Michael Frayn, writing time-obsessed comprehensive head John Cleese into calamity-strewn race to Norwich conference, driven in dad's car — and out of and into his wits — by truant girl pupil, towards higher-lunacy finale. (Sharon Maiden, Alison Steadman).

Dreamchild Carroll-Dodgson's Alices — fictions, fantasy and fact — collide in scintillating cinema first for Gavin Millar, polishing every facet of original Dennis Potter script. Old Mrs Hargreaves, née Liddell (superb Coral Browne), has bad, lyric, macabre 1932 centenary NY trip, memory's whirligig halting on late-learned love (Ian Holm, Amelia Shankley).

Defence of the Realm Fumes of menace rise from David Drury's corrosive if erratic political chiller, written by Martin Stellman, reflecting current home-based concerns. Hoodwinked into disgracing awkward MP, tabloid reporter redemptively opens can of worms as Special Branch hovers (Gabriel Byrne, Denholm Elliott, Greta Scacchi).

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Hoplite, a gay, Dean Swift, an MJQ-lover, and the Misery Kid, who is all for trad. At his parents' house, shown with its facade removed in a split-level fantasy-farce sequence, where Colin has his darkroom, Dad is being cuckolded by Ma (Mandy Rice-Davies: well, she would, wouldn't she?) with the lodgers. Colin spends some of his time at the Chez Nobody jazz club — a coffee bar in the MacInnes original — where such smarties as smarmy pop mogul Harry Charms (Lionel Blair) and TV host Call Me Cobber (DJ Alan Freeman) may be encountered; and music which is neither Fifties nor Eighties — though doubtless it soon will be the latter — may be heard, cleverly disarranged by veteran Gil Evans, responsible for the overall score.

For this, of course, is an 'original' musical, with three writers, several of the performers invited to compose their own songs, David Toguri as choreographer of a few uninspired little spasms of dance and no fewer than four editors. Its chief claim to originality, in the event, surely lies in its being the longest pop promo movie to date. Oh, Colin is taken up by ad exec. Vendice Partners (David Bowie, with a joke mid-Atlantic accent), which gives rise — or fall — to an appallingly messy 'show-stopper', 'That's Motivation', written by Bowie and presumably cut by all four of that credited quartet at the same time. *Absolute Beginners* junks all the virtues of Colin MacInnes's novel (humour, character-

What a night! Joanne Whalley and Bernard Hill snatch a moment in *No Surrender*

establishment, bleak reflections on racism, late Fifties veracity) in favour of caricature, noise and flash. It makes *West Side Story*, filmically botched though it was, feel as rich as Shakespeare.

That all's not lost on the home front, the Liverpool-set (largely one-set) black comedy, **No Surrender**, ferociously proves. Directed by Peter Smith, who made the splendid *A Private Enterprise* a dozen years ago and who surely had his hands full here reconciling styles and moods, this is pure Alan 'Blackstuff' Bleasdale: jerky, raging, harsh, hilarious and ultimately optimistic, or — at least — affirmative. Mike (Michael Angelis) arrives as new manager of the isolated, shed-like Charleston Club on New Year's Eve, to find that not only is the job's previous tenant being horribly tortured in a storeroom for fiddling, but that he has revenged himself for the sacking by accepting bookings from an OAP's Orange Lodge group, their mortal old enemies from an Irish Catholic club and — for Hogarthian measure — a handful of batty geriatrics. He has further booked as entertainment a gay comic, an inept magician (Elvis Costello) with a moribund rabbit and a warring punk combo whose screamed ballad, 'We're Gonna Die!', is to be poorly received. Aiding Mike through a mountingly grotesque night are Bernard (Bernard Hill), the world's thickest bouncer, and would-be singer Cheryl (Joanne Whalley), cheerily foul-mouthed cook and bottle-washer.

Accentuating the ancient religious rifts, Norman (Mark Mulholland), a Belfast terrorist on the run, forces strife-weary Billy (Ray McAnally), once known as the Beast and in charge of the Protestant coach-load of old 'uns, to hide him temporarily at the club. Long before 'Auld Lang Syne', Billy has had to dispose of him when Norman suspects he has summoned the Special Branch coppers ranged outside. There is also a blind ex-boxer Paddy (James Ellis), Catholic to his bulging gloves, bent on a fisticuff showdown with Billy. Packed with incident and city-smart one-liners, with a motley of brilliantly etched and played odd-balls, the show lurches dangerously now and then (as in the verismo of that torture scene; the heart-attack death of a fat, cocoa-daubed, 'Hawaiian' wife outside — a fancy-dress competition is on the menu, too), yet maintains an extraordinary drive and energy. The sick comedy is rooted, as when Special Branch men kick down the wrong high-rise door, confusing 'Attlee' with 'Gaitskell'. 'Fucking coffin-dodgers,' mutters the dreadful comic, hooted off stage. How potentially inflammatory this Bleasdale semi-fantasia on the awful, divisive, ever-present theme of sectarianism might be is something else. One trusts Billy's closing gesture comes over as an authentic olive branch, something more than wish-fulfilment. □

THEATRE

Rage, rage

Benedict Nightingale

The Normal Heart
LARRY KRAMER *Royal Court*

THE NORMAL HEART, as everyone should by now know, is the first American play about Aids to hit our shores — and, as everyone doesn't, a sturdier piece than the desire to inform, persuade and foster indignation usually manages to produce.

There is, to be sure, a certain awkwardness as the clinical, social and political background is conscientiously filled in. 'Do you know this is the only country in the industrialised world besides South Africa that doesn't guarantee health care for everyone?' asks New York doctor of New York writer. 'It's a way of communicating, which becomes an addiction,' explains New York writer to New York doctor, who can't comprehend gay backroom rituals, 'and the gays are caught in the web of peer pressure to perform and perform.' Still, the plonking exegesis is a pretty venial theatrical sin, and these particular examples are quickly forgotten in the gathering turbulence at the Court.

The writer is Ned Weeks, like Larry Kramer co-founder of an organisation designed to help victims of Aids and draw attention to their plight. Again like Kramer, he's a feisty type, interesting in himself and a profitable source of dramatic conflict. You never know at whom he'll bang off next: the *New York Times*, which is accused of standoffishness and worse; Mayor Koch, who seems little more than embarrassed by the Black Death that's appeared at his back door; his own brother, representing a straight world whose 'singleminded determination to see us as sick helps keep us sick'; or faint hearts on his own side of the sexual barricades.

And this, of course, is where the play earns its label of 'controversial'. The bigotry it exposes in the American establishment or on the American Right may still shock, but hardly has the power to surprise any more. We know that the Rev. Jerry Falwell thinks Aids an updated amalgam of the plagues with which the erring Egyptians were zapped three millennia ago. We know that President Reagan is so scared of homosexuality that he felt impelled publicly to defend his son as 'all man' when he indulged in the suspiciously Grecian art of dance. I know, having lived in New York for much of the period covered by this play, that even the 'liberal' Koch has waxed vastly more indignant against a law preventing his constituents from taking liquor into unlicensed restaurants than about the needs and rights of dying gays. I don't find it difficult to believe what Kramer shows in his play: that it took 14 months of intensifying epidemic before Aids lobbyists managed to secure a furtive and vaguely menacing meeting

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with a mayorial aide, and several more before the mayorial coffers came up with a measly $9,000, to be withdrawn if its source was ever revealed.

The Normal Heart's outrage at this is, let me concede, much more than weary and mechanical. Indeed, officialdom's under-reaction to Aids is pointedly compared to its indifference to the Holocaust 50 years ago. But when Kramer's Weeks says, 'it's all our fault, every one of us,' he and his author mean it. Their two fingers are also pointed at what they see as contemporary counterparts of the Jews who failed adequately to protest at the extermination of their race or even themselves went compliantly to the ovens.

This comes across as more than sensational rhetoric, too. The liveliest scenes, those which show Ned angrily embattled with the fellow-members of his group, convince one that at least there's a case to answer. How can a minority achieve anything if its been half-conditioned to apologise for its very existence and is terrified of offending its oppressors with the slightest show of self-assertion? How can a successful lobby be mounted by people as nervous for their jobs, incomes and place in straight society as several characters shown here? As Ned sees it, cowardice is behind the creed that it's wiser to argue a quiet case within the system than picket the White House. His author takes a similar view, I think; but less immoderately, more charitably. He recognises, more than the over-impetuous Ned, that it's hard to commit professional suicide by bursting noisily from the closet in which aeons of homophobia have trapped you.

The result is a play which combines commitment with a degree of complexity. That's not only the case when it's concerned with pride, integrity and the obligation of the hale and well-off to their sick and afflicted brothers. It also puts the argument for, and against, greater chastity. For Ned, it's time to prove he belongs to a culture defined by more than the interplay of private parts, one which must learn to value love and companionship above bathhouse promiscuity. Yet this suggestion leads to the only outburst in the play fiercer than any of his own. 'I've spent 15 years fighting for our right to be free and make love whenever, wherever, and you're telling me I'm a murderer,' yells his antagonist. 'Can't you see how important it is for us to love openly, without guilt?' It's a contretemps that nearly leads to blows — and will, one suspects, continue to rage after a cure for Aids has been discovered, a prospect Kramer clearly thinks remote.

Actually, that prospect has brightened somewhat since the play's composition, thanks to the death of a Hollywood star, the growing realisation of heterosexuals that they're threatened too and the promise of prizes and profits for the discoverers. So Kramer's play has dated, a bit. What hasn't dated is its intelligent handling of issues likely to remain central to the gay community; intelligent and, let me end by emphasising, caring too. Kramer never lets us forget that people, not exemplary gays, are being sentenced to death, painfully wasting, expiring and (on occasions) being crammed into bags and thrown out with the garbage. Ned's tale is designed to appeal to the organs of feeling as well as to the mind and conscience and, with Martin Sheen forcefully yet sensitively at the head of David Hayman's capable cast, it undeniably succeeds in doing so. If this is agitprop, it is agitprop with a human face; if it's a dramatic debate, it's a debate with a heart. □

VIDEO

Screen play

John Wyver

Freed from the sterile techno-nursery, video art is celebrating an exuberant coming of age

UNTIL RECENTLY video art suffered from the prejudice that it was dull, ineptly produced, over-long, more boring than *Crossroads* and consequently of interest only to other video makers. Although this myth drew sustenance from a residual trace of truth, it is now a judgment that demands to be challenged and overthrown. And the current exhibition, *Scanners*, at the AIR Gallery is as convincing a presentation as any of video as an exciting, entertaining and stimulating medium.

In a history of just 15 or so years, video has explored a remarkably diverse range of concerns. At first those intrigued by the new medium often concentrated on its technical peculiarities and potential. Soon it was recognised that the fledgling art would have to negotiate a relationship with the overwhelmingly dominant forms and ideas of broadcast television. Many video makers have exploited their medium's oppositional possibilities and produced social-action and agitational tapes. Like last year's extraordinarily successful *The Miners Tapes*, these are often made for particular audiences and linked to specific campaigns and have been used with great effectiveness.

Other tape makers have opted to live, in however uneasy a partnership, with television. This has especially been so in the United States, where video has in any case received far greater support from museums, art galleries and even certain elements of cable and public broadcasting television. Artists have consistently parodied television, they have 'borrowed' and re-used its pictures and they have investigated its relationship with society's power structures. Above all, they have sought to create alternatives to the restricted range of images which constitute an evening's output from the small screen.

In the past four or five years television has started to exploit mercilessly these new images. The explosion of music promos has meant that many of video's tentative experiments have been gobbled up in the relentless chase after new 'styles'. Adverts have similarly plundered video's new vocabulary, as in Rowan Atkinson's current commercial for Sony's Trinitron television. In 30 seconds this runs through a catalogue of sophisticated visual tricks and jokes about the medium, all of which have clear precedents in video art. Last year the breakthrough development in video was Scratch, which is the rapid re-cutting of television sequences to reveal new meanings. This year Scratch is flavour of the month for the opening titles of television shows like *Saturday Live* and Channel 4's forthcoming series about television, *Open the Box*.

Despite these interchanges, video has remained largely invisible to a general audience. In London only the ICA and the distribution organisation London Video Arts mounted regular screenings, which were too often sparsely attended. And this experience was frequently echoed in the handful of other interested venues around the country. Television, too, did little to recognise its debts to the medium.

Channel 4, however, has begun to change that. Video maker Anna Ridley was commissioned to make new videos with painter and diarist Ian Breakwell and with other artists for her series *Dadarama*. The unconventional arts magazine *Alter Image* (soon to return for a new series) incorporated and commissioned some highly imaginative videos. Last September three *Eleventh Hour* programmes, 'video 1, 2 and 3', presented some of the most interesting British video together with interviews and contextual comments. And at the beginning of this year the series *Ghosts in the Machine* showcased international work.

Video art's profile is consequently now higher than ever before and the *Scanners* exhibition, co-ordinated by London Video Arts, is well timed to take advantage of this. Anyone looking for a crash introduction to the medium will certainly find it in the mix of installations, screenings, discussions and even workshops on offer, and in the resourceful catalogue which, with Arts Council support, has been produced on a VHS cassette.

This catalogue, which runs for an hour and costs £13.99, is one of the best features of the show. The production values are not those of broadcast television, but the mix of interviews, extracts and information is sharply paced and thoroughly appropriate for the exhibition.

Another imaginative innovation is the 'Window Box', a grid of nine screens which face onto the street and on which short silent tapes are played to catch the attention of — and, it is hoped, to delight — the passer-by. Inside the gallery, alongside three installations which use video in quite different ways, a programme of newly-commissioned short 'postcards' is constantly on display, as is a selection of recent video from Japan.

Certain of the pieces, like Mineo Aayamaguchi's nine-screen installation, celebrate the purely aesthetic qualities of video. Others interrogate broadcast television, although few in as literal a manner as Kevin Atherton's hilarious if occasionally heavy-handed 'interview' with an episode of *Coronation Street*. Many of the best tapes use humour and irony, like the postcard 'See You Before You See This' which sketches with an electronic pen the tensions and evasions of a family holiday.

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Perhaps disappointingly, too few of the pieces on show bring new images to any real engagement with hard-edged political realities, although Mike Stubbs's postcard 'Greetings from the Cape of Good Hope?' is a telling comment on South Africa. But what the show demonstrates overall is that, although video is a young medium, it is already mature. It needs no apologies, nor should it be too much longer before the prejudices against it are no more than memories. □

Scanners *is at the AIR Gallery, 6-8 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1 4TD, until 13 April. Ring 278 7751 for details of additional screenings and lunchtime discussions.*

PHOTOGRAPHY

Look at us

Halla Beloff

Britons: 50 Group Portraits
NEAL SLAVIN *National Museum of Photography, Film & Television, Bradford, to 29 June*

PHOTOGRAPHERS HAVE always been attracted to Doomsday Book work. The camera seems ideally suited to produce a survey of people in their ordinary contexts, while studying a whole swathe of them does have its own fascination. The pictures are bound to have a documentary quality — the people are real or they couldn't have been photographed — and it's fun to see who's been worthy of choice, who's been left behind, how they came out. Neal Slavin is the latest to present us to ourselves, under the formidable title *Britons*.

In 1979 another American, Arnold Newman, photographed a cross section of well known London people and called it (even more formidably) *The Great British*. His subjects were experienced in media performance, accepted on their own terms, and had the gloss of their fame to see them through what you and I might experience as the ordeal of being photographed. In attempting to provide a complement of 'common people', Neal Slavin might have had difficulty in getting such smooth presentations.

As it was, Slavin had two advantages. As in his earlier collection in the USA, he sought out groups of people who were used to coming together for collective enterprises. That way, they could face the camera justified by a group social identity; they could find strength in a crowd. And he used a 20 × 24 inch Polaroid camera, which is not just a technical matter. On the one hand it gave instant feed-back for the rehearsal of poses for an ideal show, while, on the other, the very awkwardness of the monster machine removed the snatching power of the photographer and evened up the work that both parties had to do. In fact the camera had to be transported round the UK in a van and needed a team of technicians to service it as well as to lug it about. One can imagine the reward when one of those big, one-off, shiny pictures was pulled out and the cover peeled away. The prints on show certainly have a richness and a depth of colour that deserve the cliché 'jewel-like'.

With obvious good will, the groups set themselves up to their own taste and best advantage. It took hours rather than minutes. Yet Slavin has got light and pattern and depth of setting with panache. The RNLI lifeboat crew handles its boat on the slipway without ingratiation, a helicopter accessory balancing symmetrically just above; the mature members of the Bickley School of Dancing smile and smile, the women with that perfect tilt of the head and their partners holding their breath for that first smooth glide.

Apart from such stalwarts of the British scene, who are we and what do we do? We are miners and nightclub greeters, elephant keepers and distressed gentlewomen. We swim the Channel for fun, have ourselves beautifully tattooed all over, black our faces as Morris Men. As Auberon Waugh says in the Preface to the catalogue/book (complete and faithful in its 50 reproductions, from the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television & Andre Deutsch, £9.95), Slavin chose subjects that were at the same time unexpected, typical and peculiar to Britain.

As demography, it's partial. Lord and Lady Brookeborough, the chiefs of clan MacMillan, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire (complete with backdrop of 150 retainers) provide amusing talking points — but are visual embroidery rather than subversive comment. The same is true of the Dragon School cricket team, who show themselves unabashedly as lordlings of creation. They have not yet learned the modern politesse of camouflaging one's privileges. We are certainly challenged to interpret what is going on under the bowler hats of the Sandy Row Loyal Orange Lodge members who present themselves in such cherubic innocence, but on the whole it's clear that we're a thoroughly nice bunch of people. We enjoy hiding in uniforms and dotty leisure pursuits. We see the irony of our position, so we laugh quite a lot — all this within the going concern of the class system.

The happiest people seem those most closely found within their groups. The Sisters of the Redemptoristine Convent are in high old spirits and the Norland Nannie class, lined up formally with its weaponry of high-wheel prams, could also not restrain its giggles. Solemnity comes to those who bear the burdens of office. The all-male committee of the Royal Academy looks as if it were to hang men instead of canvasses. Nor does idleness seem to suit us puritans. There are none more tired of life than the Debutantes at the Berkeley Hotel or the afternoon loungers at the Colony Club in Soho.

All right, the lack of picturesque interest precluded a team of social workers, or a network of computer operators, but with the directness of its super-sized, unique, coloured Polaroid prints, *Britons* is a photographic *tour de force*. □

Britons *will be at the Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal, from 25 July to 1 September; at the Metro Cinema, Derby, from 8 September to 5 October; at the Triangle Arts Centre, Birmingham, from end October to end December.*

Red wines from Rioja

Stephen Brook

RIOJA, THE WINE of northern Spain, has long been popular in Britain: it has always been good value and there is now available a wider choice than ever before. The Rioja region, with 110,000 acres of vineyards, is huge, yet the wines exhibit admirable consistency not just of quality but of style.

This style derives from three principal factors. First, the grape varieties used for Rioja — Tempranillo mostly, though three other varieties are permitted, including Grenache. Secondly, Rioja Alta and Rioja Alavesa, the two districts that produce the best wines, are temperate, compared with most of Spain and southern France. Consequently, the wines rarely have that stewed quality characteristic of routinely made wines from very hot areas. Thirdly, Rioja is traditionally subject to long barrel-ageing, which gives the wine a distinctive oaky flavour: powerful undertones of vanilla on the nose and vanilla and sweet fruitiness on the palate.

This style is not universally admired. Some people dislike that pronounced oaky flavour and prefer wines that spend less time in wood and that display a more exuberant if less complex fruitiness. There certainly are Riojas on the market that are over-oaked and marred by a stalky taste, but the majority are well balanced wines that successfully knit together the flavours of fruit and oak into a harmonious whole. There are four categories of red Rioja: Sin Crianza (wine that need not have been aged in wood); Crianza (a year in oak, a year in bottle); Reserva (a year in oak, two years in bottle) and Gran Reserva (a year in oak, three years in bottle). These are minimum requirements only and many Reservas will have spent far more than one year in wood and may not be released until they are six or more years old. The cost of ageing the wine is reflected in the prices, and Gran Reservas are the most costly Riojas. This is not to say that a Crianza is a mediocre wine. Far from it: some of the loveliest Riojas are Crianzas. Still, price is a reasonable indication of quality. A good Crianza should cost between £2.50 and £3, a Reserva from £3 to £4.50, and a Gran Reserva costs from £4 upwards.

Tastings, in most cases blind, of dozens of wines on the market were revealing and reassuring. (Prices cited are from the cheapest source, though many of the wines can also be found elsewhere.) With very few exceptions, Crianza wines were better, and no more expensive, than generic Riojas. Some, such as Vina Alberdi from 1980 (Oddbins £2.99) or 1983 (Sainsbury £2.55), are very typical of the Rioja style, though I personally prefer wines

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that are more robust and richly fruity, such as 1980 Cerro Anon (Gough £2.49) and the very well balanced 1981 Marques de Caceres (Gough £2.99). The worst that could be said about some of the other Crianza wines, such as 1982 Lancorta (Waitrose £2.49) and 1982 Puerta Vieja (Majestic £2.39), is that they lack character. None of the wines struck me as positively poor and that in itself is a tribute to the overall standard of Rioja. One Crianza wine stands head and shoulders above the others: 1981 Marques de Murrieta (Roberts £3.99). And so it should, given the price. This is a wine of firmness, depth and elegance, qualities one looks for, and doesn't always find, in expensive claret.

Out of twelve Reservas I found irresistible the rich fruity sumptuousness of Vina Ardanza (1976 vintage Sainsbury £4.45; 1978 Peter Dominic £4.75), 1980 Domecq (Dominic £3.25) and 1980 Monte Real (Majestic £2.99). These are delicious wines, but if you are looking for elegance and subtlety rather than lushness, you may prefer 1978 Gran Condal (Waitrose £3.25) or 1980 Faustino V (Unwin £4.09). Two wines stood out not because they are notably better but because of their positive character. One is the 1981 Marques de Riscal (Victoria £4.29), which has similar qualities to the 1981 Murrieta, being perfumed, well structured and refined. The other is the 1978 Coto de Imaz (Unwin £4.59), a rounded and very seductive wine.

To make a young fruity wine with ripe grapes is relatively easy. To make a Gran Reserva is not. Long ageing in barrel and bottle is designed to bring out the wine's finesse and delicacy, but it will succeed only if the basic materials are first-rate. Too long a period in oak can unbalance a wine. Despite the reputation that Gran Reservas have for being blockbusters, I find the best notable for their concentration of flavour and refinement of style. Those that disappointed were attenuated and lacking in fruit. The best had precisely the complexities that make the drinking of wine so pleasurable. The 1970 Faustino (Unwin £5.49) was the oldest Gran Reserva but showed no signs of age at all; it is full-bodied and spicy and has excellent length. The Monte Reals (1973 from Majestic £4.59; 1978 from Majestic £3.29) may lack subtlety, but are packed with so much lush peppery fruitiness that I didn't miss the refinement. More typical of a good Gran Reserva is the 1973 Vina Albina (Oddbins £5.35), perfumed, elegant and mouth-filling, with acidity and fruit in perfect balance. Like all good Gran Reservas it has wonderful length of flavour in the mouth.

Other wines less widely available but worth looking for include the Reserva 904 series from Bodegas La Rioja Alta, expensive but superb, the traditionally made Reservas from Bodegas Berberana, and the refined Vina Real Reservas. Best recent vintages are 1970, 1973, 1976, 1978 and 1981, though some bodegas have made good wines in mediocre years. Indeed, the great virtue of Riojas is their consistency of quality. A range of Burgundies at three times the price would, I'm sure, include more duds than I found among 35 Riojas. For wines from so large a region, this is no mean feat. □

TELEVISION

Hugo Williams

Life lines

MY BROTHER USED to work in Fortnum's. He was let off lightly when he sold a dummy pot of caviar to someone, but had to leave when he told a rich account customer, 'We say "please" and "thank you" when we're asking for something.' Meeting a friend there for tea 20 years later he was surprised to see his friends Nigel Havers, Gareth Hunt, Ian Ogilvy and Colin Baker (Dr Who) all working there, humping hampers and wearing the Fortnum's tail coats. Were they all resting? Not exactly. My brother turned a convincing shade of white when Eamonn Andrews stepped forward dressed as a porter and spoke those worrying words: 'Simon Williams . . . **This Is Your Life**' (ITV).

We'd all known for months, of course. Researchers travel to the ends of the earth and hang on your every word. I said I had a piece of old vinyl torn off the kitchen table of the house we'd all grown up in and one researcher waited ten minutes without a word of complaint while I failed to find the thing. Nothing is too much trouble — as long as we didn't tell him.

I did consider telling him. After all, where do one's loyalties lie? Mightn't he want to get a haircut or wear a different suit? In the end I thought it would be more of a worry for him pretending *not* to know. He himself only wondered why he hadn't heard from any of his friends recently. It was as if he'd died in order to be guest of honour at his own memorial service.

At the run-through the night before, my mother, flown in from Portugal for the occasion and stashed in a safe-house out of the way of the children, mentioned the name of Danny Blanchflower. There was an appalled hush at the memory of the only 'subject' in 30 years to have told them to stuff it, sending months of teamwork up in smoke and leaving his nearest and dearest, childhood sweethearts, service pals, everyone, waiting expectantly backstage — not to mention a studio audience of 800. There was nervous amusement round the conference table and polite requests for us to leave the scripts behind until tomorrow.

For the show is indeed scripted, down to the last comma and camera angle. Your fumbled family anecdotes are compared, rationalised, condensed and incorporated into a half-hour show by writer Roy Bottomley. Then you learn your words by heart. I'd always wondered why guests seemed to know Eamonn personally. This is because their scripted fondnesses, prefaced by 'ENTER, GREET & SIT' (for family) or 'ENTER, GREET AND STAND' (for celebrities), invariably start off 'Well, Eamonn, I first met Jimmy . . . etc.' When I got my script I didn't recognise my story of a black leather Cisco Kid outfit and real horses because the game had been imaginary. After some word-bargaining and a promise to end on the same cue-word so Eamonn could pick up the thread, the story was re-written, the page re-typed and re-stapled into the 30-page script. Likewise, my mother said she couldn't call him her 'tiny little darling' just because he was two months premature; she'd rather say he'd ruined her Ascot. Fair enough. Home in chauffeured cars to get our beauty sleep.

The following day cars picked everyone up from their homes all over England and ferried us to the Royalty in Kingsway. It was a Tuesday, *NS* copy day, and I had to get my driver to make a detour via Farringdon Lane, which he wasn't too happy about. I'd missed the dress rehearsal, but everyone was walking about the hospitality lounge repeating their lines to one another and swigging hospitality. Did I want some powder on that red spot on my nose? Was I wearing that jacket? Never mind. I was sitting on the right in the stage seating plan so no one would see the half-stitched sleeve. Now men with walkie-talkies muttered, 'Subject is approaching . . . ' It was time to gather in the wings.

On a tight row of camp-stools sat Jean Marsh, David Langdon and Nicola Pagett from *Upstairs, Downstairs*, Maureen Lipman from *Agony* and Andrew Birkin and Hayley Mills from my brother's childhood. In the distance we could hear the warm-up man at work teaching the audience how to laugh and clap. They would soon know all too well, because we were having a technical hitch.

Wine was served in the wings and people started going to the lavatory again. The children were delighted and kept saying, 'The screen's gone green, it's gremlins.' The dogs didn't like it and my mother, perched on her stool, wished they would get on, her adrenalin was peaking. 'I don't think he's famous enough to be on *This Is Your Life,*' said his son Tamlyn.

All this time my brother was being kept talking in the star dressing-room. They don't like to give their subject — code-named 'The Saint' on this occasion — time to think what's about to hit him and take a childlike pleasure in causing the maximum shock. Ten minutes is normal. This was over an hour. The warm-up man had long ago gone cold, his 12-minute patter stretched to embarrassment as he asked repeatedly if everyone could come back tomorrow. Finally I heard my pre-recorded voice saying, 'Hey, Pancho! Fetch the horses!' and Eamonn's voice saying, 'The Cisco Kid of years ago, of course your brother.' I entered, greeted and embraced, muttering, 'You knew, you cunt'; which was picked up on his lapel-mike and had to be quickly suppressed by the mixing board. I did my piece, but it's a moment no one can fail at because the audience isn't allowed to stop clapping till your bum hits the seat. Most memorable for me was Andrew Birkin, writer and director of *The Lost Boys*, who had brought a film he made with my brother when they were teenagers, my brother's fee being a love-scene with Andrew's sister Jane. We saw a hazy clip of a kiss in a boat on a lake, then the present-day Jane speaking from Paris, remembering 'those precious last days of childhood'. Her message said it all: the past is another country.

Still, if we can't get to it from here, at least we'll all be able to put on the video and go back to *This Is Your Life.* □

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Naseem Khan
Quavers

AS INVITATIONS go, it bordered on the brave, not to say the foolhardy. One hundred schoolchildren, between the ages of 11 and 14, were invited to take part in an Opera Workshop. 'No prior knowledge, skill or experience required,' it said. 'Just enthusiasm.' Moreover, at the end of the day, it promised a public performance by children of work they'd devised. What optimism, what energy, I thought, and, what's more, potentially an admirable way in for children to an art form they normally rarely encounter. No wonder Work in Progress set off to London's Place Theatre, notebook in hand.

It was a quiet, early Monday morning, but the Place's ample performance space was crammed with children doing warming-up exercises. Another school party poured into the auditorium and the opera team sprang cheerily to meet them, labels in hand. More children, and more. Not 100 (and just as well) but quite enough to keep the six tutors from the Modern Music Theatre Troupe (MMTT) — under the aegis of Camden Festival's excellent Young Festival — tied up for the day.

The aim in fact was to introduce children not so much to opera as to music-theatre. It is not widely done (apart from by the egregious National Youth Music Theatre) and you can see why. It is a complex discipline, fraught with misconceptions and misunderstandings. Not surprisingly, the children had little idea of what they were in for. Some thought it would be like *Fame* and had got their multicoloured leotards out. More bookish ones, stuffed full of Noel Streatfeild, thought it would be scripts and plays. A few musically adept children were looking around for 'proper' instruments. The divisions are lessons enough in themselves. For the idea of mixing and mingling, and of using abstract sound to an expressive end, was a hard one.

The day was not as unstructured as the MMTT's publicity might have made out. The MMTT had worked out a neat backbone of a package that was designed to give all children a chance to work with all of the three aspects into which they divided music-theatre: words, movement and music. The team had picked the theme of three seasons, so the large mass of children was divided up into three and each group went off variously to work first of all on the words, movement and music related to autumn. After half an hour the groups rotated, moving on to a different aspect, leader and season. No more than that was spelled out; other initiatives had to come from the children — not always an easy matter.

'What feelings do you get in winter? How does it make you feel?' gently probed the 'words' leader as his group clustered round him in one of the dressing-rooms. 'Cold,' they said instantly. 'No, but how do you feel inside yourself?' They looked at him suspiciously. 'Snowballs,' said one child a bit crossly. 'Jesus,' proffered another. 'Well, it's not really winter, but we'll put Him in.' The leader wrote the words down on a large sheet.

The movement session went more happily. It was autumn; the leader asked for harvest machines. Groups of three got together to work out composite solutions. And interestingly diverse solutions they were. Some kids rolled along the ground; others advanced in unison with an up-and-over arm movement; one girl jumped up and down like a mechanical frog. Half an hour was up and they went off to the big box of percussion and cymbals and bells that was raided for the music session. Back in the dressing room, the next lot — a younger group — were having more success with words that go with spring: water, blossoms, funfairs, sadness. The leader next encouraged them to weave these into a haiku-like poem, then to find illustrating sounds. Not all of them were equally uninhibited in making blobby gurgling sounds for water, but that was the name of the game. With just one day to make a piece, the MMTT have to cut corners. But, for each child that opted out ('Bells over this side,' called the music leader; 'I'm not a bell, I'm a human,' one of the rebels muttered), there were ten or so willing to give it all a try.

The performance was a decided lure. After lunch, the whole group assembled on stage. 'It's now five to two,' said one of MMTT solemnly. 'At three o'clock there will be an audience.' There was a rustle of excitement. And, indeed, by three o'clock there was a product. It opened with autumn. On one side the 'words' group sat round their 'conductor' reciting the poem they'd constructed out of their autumn words. Behind them the movement section added their threshing and bonfire work. To the right, a circle of children provided a backdrop of instrumental sound. Spring followed, then winter. Not surprisingly, it was a ragbag of work, but each bit had moments of great freshness. Occasionally, as in one bit of spring, music and movements did reinforce each other. The low spot of each turned out to be not so much the words as the way in which they were recited, with a dreary kind of intoning that sounded like the worst of school poetry. But the London Contemporary Dance students brought in as an audience shouted cheers and everybody brightened up visibly.

Of course, it was, in its way, a tour de force (and a pretty exhausting one too). The day's programme had allowed for no let-up. Quickie session followed quickie session and there was an undeniable element of anxiety. Would something emerge? There was no need for it to, stressed team leaders, but no one really believed them. The Modern Music Theatre Troupe is a newish group and the schools exploration groups, like that day's, are new ventures. There are clearly a lot of wrinkles to disperse. Most bumpy is the format itself — why one day? And why so many participants? It's a bright idea, bringing music-theatre to young people, and a needed one. But it's not an easy concept (particularly in a country that views mixed disciplines with suspicion) and the targets need to be more clearly pointed. □

Weekend competition

No 2918 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Wanted, sonnets 'On First Looking Through Last Year's Summer Wardrobe'. By 17 April, please.

No 2915 **Set by A. Boteman**

Potted biographies of the famous in their own style.

Report **By Di Dact**

A fine Rabbie Burns, Master Petty, but more lit. crit. than biography. No prizes, either, for those who gloated, 'You didn't set a word limit, so . . .' Culprits will write out 100 times: 'I shall not be silly and selfish.' Meanwhile, gold stars and £10 a head to the following:

Look. He is born now, sobbing seagull-squab fury, shaking red fists, red, unread, shivertimbering the cradle with new rage at the cat-calling world.

It's me, Caitlin. Smiling gypsy-eyebrowed from Bohemia, who's my little wonder.

Blind Captain Thomas, every day a blinder, stands on his step to say his poetry. Oh, my deaf darlings, nothing in your pockets but cut-glass visiting cards. Where are the cosy fivers, cheques to warm the bottom of my glass?

Bowery flowery West Side girls, fishnet flashing in split silky skirts, oh, Dylan bach, how could you? Easy, says Captain Thomas.

He is gone now, gone from the skittle-alleying sawdust, gone from beer as flat as a sermon. Listen. The red fists still shake.

ALISON PRINCE

Sonnet 155
(Never Before Imprinted)

I stand as doubtful in the eye of Time,
The day unknown that fairly gave me birth,
Obscure I am and in obscurer rhyme
I hide myself, my woe, my youthful mirth,
My rustic marriage to uncertain Anne,
The years in that great city where the play
Seduced my honeyed muse, where I began
To harvest in my wit, in the world's way.
I hid my loves, though players did report
Encounters in the deep deceitful dark,
While some were wont to say I loved the Court,
Sweet ladies deer in that high scented park.
My life I am content should be unknown,
So that my works to Time shall still be shown.

GAVIN EWART

The stage is dimly lit. There is a small table in the centre. An elderly man enters, carrying a tape recorder. Ignoring the table, he places the recorder on the floor and puts in a tape. There is silence. When the tape has finished turning, a large pair of false teeth descends from the flies. The man half looks up.

Teeth: You were born.
(Pause)
Teeth: You are not yet dead.
(Pause)
Teeth: You have written.
(Long pause)
Teeth: Enough.

MARTIN BROWN

E. C. Bentley
Was inspired to invent the
Clerihew by his sense of the ridiculous.
He also fathered Nicholas.

NIGEL BUNKER

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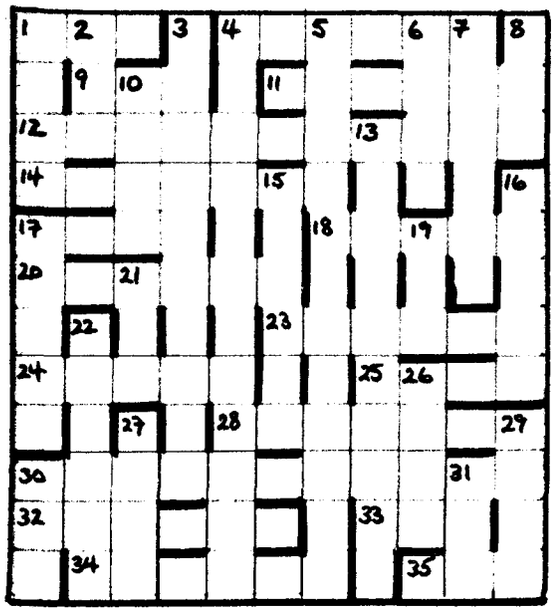
Salamanca 106

'Gowk-hunt'

PRIZE: £35 cheque for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Salamanca 106, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 29 April.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

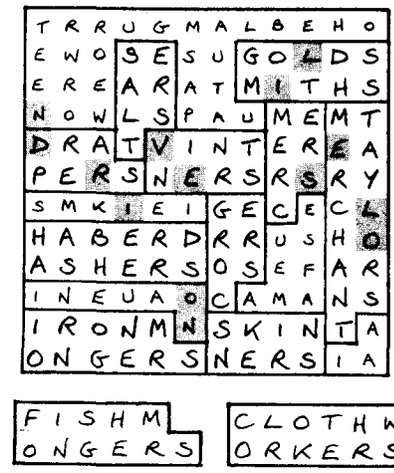
ACROSS

1 Male having work cleaning needs this?
4 Fishes for fiddles
9 Poor beast, not German
11 Two persons, the second exhausted, after old raid
12 These are for testing nuts, weld in tail formation, structure etc.
14 Worthless person wearing silver badge (3 words)
17 Rinse from dips in detergent
18 I catch fish (not caught on a pin)
20 To make fire meant lad needed a flame and ____
23 Where (in Morocco) to wander idly in warm and dry
24 Who's very wicked undergoing a slight change so no longer very bad?
25 Himalayan beast with black coat covering rough back
28 Round ____ 're manufactured as containers
30 Small animal giving a puff, lacking energy
32 No longer promised the OBE for designing
33 Time to be in by when it's no longer foul
34 Fellow having caged bird for 'sullen' girl
35 Insists that, given time, herpes is curable

DOWN

1 Cut down a tree
2 Worn by 31 and when in high tree changing rapidly
3 Waits for stretches and turns out right
4 They're used in fencing grounds, without, within
5 On which you'ld see baggage carried with roof guns trained
6 Conkers facing third challenge are this time worse off
7 It will be found on heads of early troops
8 Feels some disgust rising inside
10 Fruit are short? I don't understand
13 On trees they seek insects (roaming ants, etc., huh?)
15 Large fish in a school, primitive one
16 Money King staked in game
17 Mac's crop put away in store
19 It alone has a *bushy* tail?
21 'O to be in . . . Kenilworth?'
22 League given place in matter with members
26 Hot and dry, this is fine for spring
27 Here is repetitive sound
29 Cut captain rather short
30 Beast before facing short punishment
31 Such silk's certainly foreign and soft

Solution to Salamanca 105



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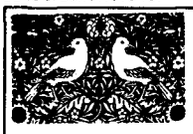

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VALUES IN BRITISH POLITICS. 'What They Are and What They Should Be'. A major lecture series at St James's Church Piccadilly at 1.05pm. This week: *The Rt Hon Norman Tebbitt MP.* Further details 01-734 4511.

SAT 12 APR

FUTURE OF LABOUR LAW CONFERENCE. Organised by SERTUC, Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. **10am at TUC.** Workshops, speakers: John Prescott MP, Margaret Prosser, John Edmonds, Ken Gill. Individuals £2, unwaged free. Creche.

ZIONISM, ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS. Speaker: SIMHA FLAPAN founder-editor of 'New Outlook'. 8pm at Mapam, 37a Broadhurst Gardens, London NW6. (Finchley Road tube).

COURSE

IRISH STUDIES at Kilburn Polytechnic Wednesday and Thursday evenings 6.00-9.00pm. Language — Literature — History — The Irish in London. *RECEPTION* Wednesday 9th April at Priory Park Road NW6. Contact Geraldine Lander or Nora O'Mahony. Tel 328 8241.

WED 16 APR

SEMINAR ON PROMOTING INNOVATION IN THE LOCAL ECONOMY. Aimed at members and officers, trade union & voluntary groups. Applications by 4 April to CLES, Heron House, Brazennose St, Manchester M2 5HD. (061) 834 7036.

SUN 13—FRI 18 APR

INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE. University of Sussex. Speakers: Hans Gunter Brauch, Laszlo Balki, Nigel Young. Themes include: Alternative Security, Militarisation and Sexism, Peace Education, Arms Control & Disarmament. Details: Gari Donn, 0273 202516.

EXHIBITION
LIFE AND WORKS OF RAJANI PALME DUTT
Tues, 8 April-Fri, 25 April
Venue: School of Oriental and African Studies, Malet St, WC1
Monday-Friday 10am-8pm
Saturday 9.30am-12.30pm
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STAR WARS — THE BREAK UP OF NATO?
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Disabled access.
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New Socialist

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MISANTHROPIC MUSINGS : SPRING FEVER
I'VE REALISED THAT SPRING HAS FINALLY ARRIVED RUBY
AND WHAT BROUGHT THIS ON- CROCUSES AND DAFFODILS OUT IN THE GARDEN, CHEAP POST-EASTER EGGS, THAT RUSH OF SOMETHING TO THE BLOOD?
NO... IT WAS SPOTTING JADE PUTTING AWAY HER ELECTRIC BLANKET
JENNIS GOODMAN

CHESS

THE 1986 GLC Chess Challenge has produced a wealth of entertaining games. Particularly pleasing has been the way in which the English players have tackled distinguished foreign opposition. Now it is the English GMs who are forcing the pace and introducing fresh ideas. Just look at the disrespectful confidence and crushing success with which Jim Plaskett ventures a new gambit against the Great Dane:

Plaskett-Larsen, Round 2. Sicilian Defence.
1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Qb6 4. Bxc6 Qxc6 5. 0-0!? d6 6. d4 cxd4 7. Nxd4 Qxe4 It looks risky to take the pawn. Black's development is soon critically in arrears. **8. Nc3 Qg4 9. Qd3 Bd7 10. Re1 Nf6 11. h3 Qg6 12. Qf3 Rb8 13. Ndb5 e5?** After this Black is positionally lost since White gets a stranglehold on d5. He had to try 13 . . . e6. **14. Nc7 + Kd8 15. N7d5 Bc6 16. Be3 b6 17. Rad1 Rc8 18. a4 Ba8 19. a5 b5 20. Bxa7 b4 21. Nb5! Be7** He might as well have tried 21 . . . Nxd5 22. Rxd5 Qe6 23. Red1. White has more than enough for the exchange then, but the game is just a massacre. **22. Rxe5! Nxd5 23. Rexd5 Ke8 24. Re1 Kf8 25. Qe3 Re8 26. Nc7 Bxd5 27. Nxd5 Qf5 28. Nc7 Qe5 29. Qxe5 dxe5 30. Nxe8 Kxe8 31. Rxe5 Kd7 32. Be3 Bd6 33. Rd5 Ke6 34. Rd2 Ra8 35. Bb6 Be5 36. b3 f5 37. Kf1 g5 38. Ke2 Bc3 39. Rd8 1-0.**

Murray Chandler had already set the right tone by absolutely demolishing a highly-rated Russian who had qualified for the Candidates' semi-finals:

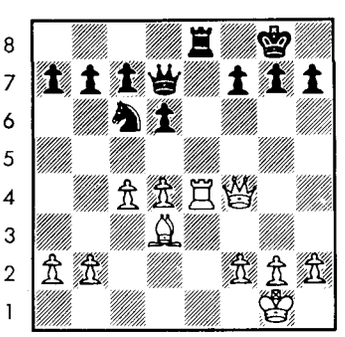
Chandler-Vaganian, Round 1. French Defence.
1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e5 c5 5. a3 Ba5 This game corroborates the general view that 5 . . . Bxc3 + is better. **6. b4 cxd4 7. Nb5 Bc7 8. f4 Bd7 9. Nf3 Bxb5 10. Bxb5 + Nc6 11. 0-0 Nge7 12. Bd3 a6 13. Kh1 h6 14. Qe2 Qd7 15. Bb2 Bb6 16. Rae1 Rc8 17. g4!** It is quite amazing that the Russian GM is already helpless in the face of White's thematic breakthrough f4-f5. **18. Nh4 h5 19. f5! hxg4 20. fxg6 Rxh4 21. gxf7 + Kf8 22. Bc1!** This calm transfer is the key to White's attack, the main threat being Qd2-h6 + . **Nf5 23. Bxf5 d3 24. Bxd3 g3 25. Qg2! Rxh2 + 26. Qxh2 gxh2 27. Bh6 + Ke7 28. Bg5 + Kf8 29. Bh6 + Ke7 30. Bg6 Bc7 31. Bg5 + Kf8 32. Bh6 + Ke7 33. f8 = Q + Rxf8 34. Bxf8 + Kd8 35. Rf7 Qe8 36. Bg7 Nxe5 37. Bf6 + 1-0.** After 37 . . . Kc8 38. Rxc7 + Black loses all his pieces.

Regrets over the late withdrawal of Josef Dorfman were outweighed by delight at the splendid form of the substitute, Glenn Flear. Flear specializes in active piece-play. Pit him against that acute tactician Jonathan Mestel and the result is a glorious scrap:

Mestel-Flear, Round 5. Two Knights Defence.
1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. Ng5 d5 5. exd5 Na5 6. Bb5 + c6 7. dxc6 bxc6 8. Be2 h6 9. Nf3 e4 10. Ne5 Bd6 11. d4 exd3 12. Nxd3 Qc7 13. b3 0-0 14. Bb2 Bf5!? Gauging that the two bishops will compensate for a broken K-side. **15. Nd2 Rad8 16. h3 c5 17. 0-0 c4 18. Nxc4 Nxc4 19. bxc4 Qxc4 20. Bxf6 gxf6 21. Bg4 Bh7 22. Re1** In the subsequent play f2 proves to be a weak spot, so perhaps 22. Qd2 would have been better. **Bc5 23. Qc1 Bd4 24. Rb1 Qxa2** Threatening 25 . . . Bxd3 and 26 . . . Bxf2 + . **25. Nb4 Qc4 26. Qxh6 a5 27. Rb3! Rfe8!** Far better than 27 . . . axb4 28. Rg3 with a vicious attack. **28. Reb1 Qc5! 29. Nd3 Qxc2 30. Bd1 Re1 + !** Crunch: if 31. Ne1 Qxf2 + wins. **31. Kh2 Rxd1 32. Rb8 Qc7 + 0-1.**

Problem

In this position from **Nunn-Plaskett** (Rd.3) Jim played **20 . . . Nb4**. Why did this prompt Nunn to comment after the game: 'His cheapometer wasn't registering'?



Solution

Nunn replied **21. Qf5! Re6** If 21 . . . Qxf5 22. Rxe8 is mate, and 21 . . . Qd8 loses to 22. Re7! **22. d5** winning the exchange.

George Botterill

New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU
Tel: 01-253 2001/Editorial: 01-253 2003
Telex: 28449/Cables: Newstat, London EC1
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Published and distributed by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd

Editor: Hugh Stephenson; **Deputy Editor:** Sarah Benton; **News Editor:** Andrew Lumsden; **Editorial staff:** Duncan Campbell, Jane Dibblin, Rob Edwards (Scotland), Patrick Forbes, Peter Kellner (Political editor), John Rentoul, Claudia Wright (Washington); **Literary Editor:** Gillian Wilce; **Arts Editor:** Harriett Gilbert; **Poetry Editor:** Hugo Williams; **Production Manager:** Joanne Hurst; **Layout & design:** Vicky Hutchings; **Editorial Assistant:** Jane Thomas

Subscriptions: Cecilia Milton, Joan Scanlon; **Circulation:** Liz Cooper, John Duncan, Karin Jensen; **Display advertisements:** Laura Berryman, Michael Roberts (01-253 2001); **Classified advertisements:** David Jones (01-251 5487)

Subscription rates: UK & Eire £37; Europe (air mail only £41; rest of world: air speeded £41; air mail £52. USA: air speeded $62; air mail $83. Canada: air speeded Can $72; air mail Can $97.

Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc. (US Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to New Statesman, Speedimpex USA Inc., 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104)

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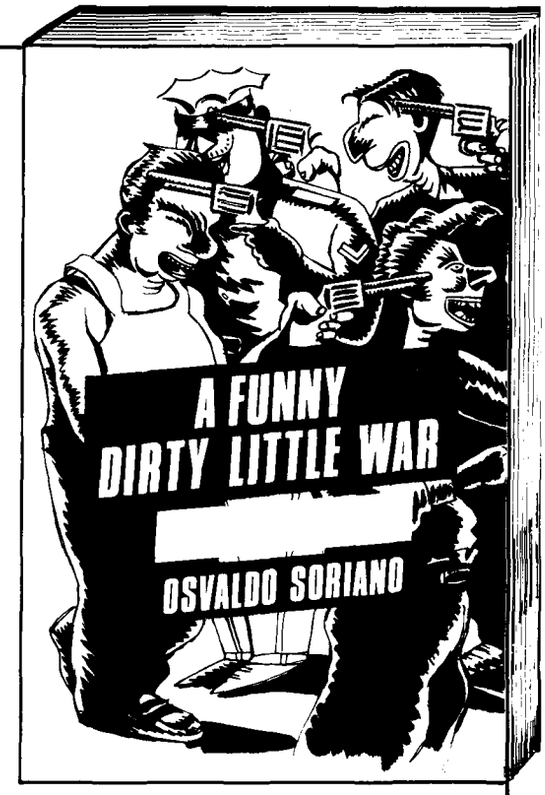

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